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EDITED BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

PETRARCH

"The man,
Who in this spirit communes with the forms
Of Nature, who with understanding heart
Doth know and love such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures, and a kindred joy.
Accordingly, he by degrees perceives
His feelings of aversion softened down;
A holy tenderness pervades his frame.
His sanity of reason not impaired,
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks around
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks;
Until abhorrence and contempt are things
He only knows by name; and if he hear
From other mouths the language which they speak;
He is compassionate, and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love."

—WORDSWORTH.

PETRARCH

BY

HENRY REEVE

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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1878

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION,	1
I.	THE MAN OF LETTERS,	8
II.	THE "EPISTLE TO POSTERITY,"	16
III.	EARLY LIFE,	27
IV.	PETRARCH AND LAURA,	33
V.	PETRARCH AT VAUCLUSE,	45
VI.	PETRARCH ON HIS TRAVELS,	65
VII.	THE POEM OF "AFRICA" AND LATIN PROSE WORKS,	75
VIII.	ASCENT OF MONT VENTOUX,	83
IX.	THE LAUREL CROWN,	90
X.	THE ANARCHY OF ITALY,	101
XI.	THE RIENZI REVOLUTION,	108
XII.	THE DEATH OF LAURA,	117
XIII.	THE EMPEROR AND THE VISCONTIS,	124
XIV.	THE PAPAL POWER,	134
XV.	PETRARCH AT VENICE AND ARQUÀ,	141

PETRARCH.

INTRODUCTION.

THE most appropriate Introduction to this notice of Francis Petrarch will be a short account of his writings, and of the various forms and editions in which they have been given to the world. Of his Italian poetry, included in the Canzoniere, and consisting of his Sonnets, Canzonets, and the Triumphs of Love, Chastity, Fame, Time, Deity, and Death (in terza-rima), it is scarcely necessary to say much, except that it is probable that no poems have been more widely circulated or more often reprinted. The first printed edition of them appeared at Venice in 1470, and is therefore one of the earliest productions of the press. Before the close of the fifteenth century 34 more editions had been sold; in the sixteenth century 167 editions have been traced; 70 in the seventeenth; 46 in the eighteenth; and more than 50 in the present age.[1] A catalogue of these

[1] It is curious to contrast with this abundant crop of publications the fact that only four editions of the works of Shakespeare were

editions was published in 1834 by Rossetti, an advocate in Trieste, and they are all accurately known. One of the best editions of his 'Rime' is that published by Zatta in Venice, in 1756, with the Commentary of Castelveltro, including also the oldest biographies of the poet and a vast superfluity of notes. In modern times the edition published by Ciardetto in Florence, in 1822, is perhaps the most complete.

The Latin works of Petrarch, from which the materials of the following pages are chiefly taken, were as follows:—

The Familiar Letters. Twenty-four books.
The Senile Letters. Seventeen books.
The Various Letters. One book.
Letters without a title. One book.

These letters were the work of his life, a complete correspondence extending from 1326 to 1374, and embracing almost every incident which befell him in those forty-eight years. They were arranged by Petrarch himself, and intended by him to be the record of his thoughts and actions. He tells us that in making the collection he destroyed above one thousand letters and pieces which he thought unworthy to form part of it.

Next come his philosophical writings:—

The Secretum, or Conflict of Cares, written in 1342.
Of Solitary Life, written in 1346.
Of Monastic Leisure, written in 1347.
Of Memorable Events (date unknown).
Of True Wisdom: a Dialogue (date unknown).

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printed (in folio) in the seventeenth century; and that the first 8vo edition of our great English poet was published in 1709.

An Itinerary to Palestine.
An Invective on a Physician. 1355.
Of the Remedies of either Fortune. 1358.
Of Ignorance: his own and that of others. 1368.
His Last Will and Testament. 1370.
Invective on a Frenchman. 1372.
Epistle to Posterity. 1370.

His Latin poems are—

The Metrical Epistles.
The Eclogues (rather satirical than bucolic).
Penitential Psalms.
The Africa, an epic poem in nine books, chiefly written between 1339 and 1341, but not made public in his lifetime.

A large portion of these works is probably unknown to most readers of the present day, but it was not so three or four centuries ago. On the contrary, they had been largely circulated in manuscript, and upon the invention of printing, no books were more eagerly published and sought after. Six folio editions of the Epistles and other prose works were printed at Basle and at Venice between 1484 and 1500; seven more in the following century; three more soon after 1600—the last and most complete at Lyons, by Samuel Crispin. It is a curious fact that the demand for the Latin works of this great medieval classic ceased at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and no further editions of them can be traced for a period of about 160 years. But the commentators on Petrarch were in the meantime not idle. Professor Marsand of Padua collected no less than 800 works relating to Petrarch and his writings. This vast collection was purchased by Charles X., King

of France, in 1829, and is now deposited in the Library of the Louvre at Paris.

It had long been regarded as a reproach to Italy, and especially to Florence, which was Petrarch's native state, though he never lived there, that so little had been done to condense and utilise these vast materials, to correct the errors with which the earlier editions of the Latin works abound, and to print those portions which still existed in manuscript. The libraries of Italy contain at least forty-nine manuscripts of the Letters more or less complete. It was reserved for a Frenchman, the Abbé de Sade, himself descended from the family into which Laura de Noves, the object of Petrarch's amatory verses, married, to publish the first complete life of the poet, based on his own prose writings. This biography appeared in three quarto volumes in 1764, with copious translations from the Letters and Poems into French. It was on this publication, rather than on an accurate examination of the originals, that Gibbon founded his graphic account of the triumph and coronation of Petrarch, which is to be found in the seventieth chapter of his great History; and Mr Hallam appears also to have relied mainly on the Abbé de Sade in his criticism of Petrarch's philosophical and familiar compositions. Gibbon said of the Abbé de Sade, "Not an idea or a fact in the writings of Petrarch appears to have escaped him." The minor biographies of Petrarch which have since appeared in English by Mrs Dobson and Thomas Campbell the poet are mere compilations from the Abbé de Sade's Memoirs.

A more original and discriminating work is that of Ugo Foscolo, whose Essays on Petrarch, published in

English, in 1823, deserve the highest praise. I say nothing of the labours of Dr Beattie, who endeavoured to prove in 1810 that all we know of Laura, and much that has been written of Petrarch, are apocryphal; or of Signor Rossetti, to whom Beatrice, Laura, and Fiammetta were myths, the impersonations of what he called the "anti-Papal spirit." In truth, though the poetry addressed to these ladies is high-flown and imaginative, nothing in the history of past ages is better or more accurately known than the lives and opinions of the poets themselves and the manners of the society in which they lived. We have them before us with the stamp of a complete reality; and recent literary investigations have only rendered this certainty more absolute.

For in our own time a work of far greater importance has been accomplished in Italy, which leaves nothing to be desired, and probably little more to be discovered. One of the ablest and most indefatigable critics of Petrarch, the Cavalier Battista Baldelli, began the collection of materials at the close of the last century. Unable to complete the undertaking, he handed them over to the Abbate Antonio Meneghelli of Padua, who published in 1818 an Index to Petrarch's Letters, both printed and in manuscript; but died before he could do more. Other hands were then employed, till at length the papers were transferred to Signor Giuseppe Fracassetti, who has given to the world the most perfect edition that exists of the whole body of Petrarch's Epistles. The series was first published in Latin at Florence in 1859, with copious indexes, a corrected text, and the addition of no less than 167 unpublished letters to the collection. This Latin edition was succeeded in 1863

by an Italian translation of the whole body of Letters, made by Signor Fracassetti, accompanied by copious notes, illustrative of the circumstances under which they were written, and introducing us to all the persons to whom they were addressed. There is not in the whole history of literature, so far as I know, another instance of details so authentic and minute with reference to the life of a great writer, as those which we possess relating to Petrarch and his friends, who lived five hundred years ago. The letters of Cicero and the letters of the younger Pliny offer the nearest parallel; but Cicero leaves much to be gathered from other histories, and Pliny's life is extremely incomplete. Petrarch is his own biographer, and the annalist of that "noble and delightful company" (as he terms it) amongst whom his life was spent. From these sources Signor Fracassetti has constructed a chronological table which relates year by year every important incident of the poet's career.

These works have thrown fresh light on Petrarch and his age, and they materially lessen the difficulty of presenting a complete picture of him to the English reader. I had myself, many years ago, and long before the publication of Signor Fracassetti's editions, devoted a good deal of time to the study of Petrarch's Latin writings and philosophy; and I revert with pleasure to one of the pursuits of my youth, having always had the desire to make the man, as well as the poet, better known to my countrymen. My design has been in some measure anticipated by M. Mézières of the French Academy, whose biographical Essay on Petrarch, was published in 1868; but the existence of this interesting work was not known to me when I undertook to write this little volume.

In spite of the long popularity of the poetry of Petrarch in all parts of Europe, it cannot be said that he has been fortunate in his translators. His merit consists so much in the exquisite grace and polish of his language, that the chief beauty of his sonnets evaporates in a harsher tongue, and many a greater poet is less difficult to translate. I have endeavoured in the following pages to select those versions from different writers, which appeared best calculated to convey the impression of the original. Macgregor is, I believe, the only person who has turned the whole Canzoniere into English verse. Some elegant specimens are due to Dean Milman and Mr Merivale. But incomparably the best translations extant are those executed by the late Lady Dacre; and of these and some prose translations executed by Ugo Foscolo himself, I have gladly availed myself, as far as they extend. In a few instances I have ventured to add to them some poetical versions of my own.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN OF LETTERS

THE fame of Francis Petrarch, which assigns to him the second place among the classics of Italy, and ranks him amongst the greatest poets of the world, rests mainly on the composition of about four thousand lines of Italian verse, addressed to a beautiful and virtuous lady of Provence, who was neither his wife nor his mistress, between his twenty-fourth and his fiftieth year. These sonnets, although the subject is monotonous, and the tone of them frequently affected and unreal, have had a success unexampled in literature. For five hundred years they have been read with pleasure and admiration by twenty generations. They retain to this day all their freshness and their grace. The pure and elegant language in which they are written has nothing of the archaic grandeur and severity of the style of Dante. Like that stream of the Sorgia in the valley Petrarch chose for a retreat, his Italian verse sprang pure and abounding from its source; and although the poet affected to treat these compositions as the "mere trifles of his youth" (*nugellas meas vulgares*), he had, perhaps unconsciously, created a language, and scattered round

him exquisite beauties, which retain, like the lyrical fragments of the Greek poets, a consecrated immortality. The latest and the most accomplished of the historians of Florence, Gino Capponi, says: "The poetical language of the 'Canzoni' followed a straight track from the Sicilians to the Bolognese, and thence to Cavalcanti, to the supreme Alighieri, and to Cino da Pistoia; but these fell short of the ultimate and inimitable perfection given to poetic diction by Francis Petrarch. In his 'Rime' there is never a word or mode savouring of old age, or which cannot be used without affectation at the present day." There is no similar instance in literature of a writer whose language attained perfection at the first jet, and retains an immaculate purity for five hundred years.

But this portion of the life and work of Petrarch, though by far the most familiar to posterity, was certainly that which least distinguished him in the eyes of his contemporaries and in his own. Nor is it easy to explain or account for the extraordinary position to which, in his own age, he attained. Born in the humbler ranks of life, and of a family exiled from Florence, he obtained the rudiments of education at Carpentras, in Provence, where his talents attracted the favourable notice of the chief of the great house of Colonna, then residing with the Papal Court at Avignon. To the patronage of the Colonnas he owed his whole advancement in life. He refused to pursue the study of the law; he refused to enter the Church as a priest; he despised monastic life; he refused office, though the great post of Papal Secretary was five times offered to him. In a warlike and lawless age he lived exclusively for the glory of letters. In a clerical age he

denounced the corruptions and evils of the Church. In a superstitious age he professed a pure and ideal religion. In a scholastic age he taught a philosophy far removed from the traditions of Aristotle and the categories of the Schools. Although his patrimony must have been very small, and the benefices he afterwards held were not important, he never wanted the means of subsistence, for incessant journeys, and of collecting books.[1] Nevertheless, such was the fame and influence he had acquired at an early age, that, before he had completed his thirty-sixth year, he was simultaneously invited by the University of Paris and by the Senate of Rome to accept the laurel crown of poetry—an honour which had not been conferred by the latter for 1300 years. No doubt this singular pre-eminence and rare distinction were aided by the exertions of powerful friends and by his own solicitations (although all trace of them has disappeared from his correspondence), but the fact is not the less extraordinary. "The learning of a theological school, and the ignorance of a lawless city," says Gibbon, "were alike unqualified to bestow the ideal though immortal wreath which genius may obtain from the free applause of the public and of posterity; but the candidate dismissed this troublesome reflection, and, after some moments of complacency and suspense, preferred the summons of the metropolis of the world." That wreath cannot be said to have been vainly bestowed, since the lapse of five centuries has not withered it. From whatever cause, we find the Laureate Petrarch

[1] A canonry in the chapter of Lombes, where his friend Giacomo Colonna was bishop, was his first benefice, conferred on him by Boniface XII. in January 1335. These stalls could be held by persons in deacon's orders.

invested, at the age of forty, with a species of contemporary dignity which has no parallel, save that of a Hebrew prophet; or, if that expression be too strong for his character, he was a *præceptor mundi*, a teacher of the world. The far grander genius of Dante had been tried by poverty and exile; the far more varied genius of Tasso was consigned, in another century, to a madman's cell. Petrarch lived on to the verge of human life, rich, honoured of all men, speaking his thoughts on all subjects with absolute freedom; treating as his equals popes, emperors, kings, and senators; rebuking the listless or the corrupt; stimulating the brave and the free; receiving homage enough to gratify his capacious vanity; and exercising a vast intellectual power over a lawless and barbarous age. Not Voltaire at Ferney, surrounded by the refinements of the eighteenth century—not Goethe at Weimar, where he lived in Olympian majesty, were more honoured than Petrarch amidst the convulsions and ignorance of the fourteenth century. Whatever else he may have done, he was undoubtedly the first man who, after the irruption of the barbarians and the night of the middle ages, raised the culture of letters to supreme honour.

It has been well said by a recent writer,[1] that Petrarch was the apostle of scholarship, the inaugurator of the humanistic impulse of the fifteenth century. He foresaw in a large and liberal spirit a new phase of European culture, a revival of the studies and the arts which constitute the chief glory and dignity of man; and there are some fine lines in his "Africa" in which he predicts the advancement of knowledge as he discerned it from afar.

[1] Symond's Renaissance in Italy, p. 70.

"To thee, perchance, if lengthened days are given,
A better age shall mark the grace of Heaven;
Not always shall this deadly sloth endure:
Our sons shall live in days more bright and pure;
Then with fresh shoots our Helicon shall glow;
Then the fresh laurel spread its sacred bough;
Then the high intellect and docile mind
Shall renovate the studies of mankind—
The love of beauty and the cause of truth
From ancient sources draw eternal youth."
—Africa, lib. ix.

Petrarch, then, was great, not only by a bootless passion which his poetical genius clothed in imperishable language—the chaste language of tenderness and of regret, without a single line that can wound the most refined sensibility—but he was great by the love of letters to which he devoted a life of indefatigable industry; by his extraordinary learning and memory, which enabled him, we know not how, to acquire and retain a minute knowledge of classical literature and history, inconceivable in an age when every writer had to be studied in manuscript, and manuscripts themselves were scarce and costly; by his independence of character and love of truth, which made him the fearless advocate of every good and great cause, speaking his mind with an eloquence and energy then unknown to Europe, and without regard to consequences; and by his devoted and passionate adherence to the freedom and glory of Italy, which he sought to promote alike by imperial or aristocratic influence and by the democracy of Rome—the inspired herald of a struggle of five centuries, which has accomplished in our times the liberation of united Italy.

A man blest with such gifts, such opportunities, such

friendships, such success, to which health and long life were added, might well be regarded, not only as one of the most fortunate, but as one of the happiest of mortal men. But there is a darker side to the picture. The poetic temperament is apt to frame imaginary evils and ideal woes, and to augment these by the expressions of an exaggerated sensibility. There remains in the most brilliant of human lives the burden of unsatisfied desires and ineffectual efforts. Petrarch owed a large portion of his fame to the tender and graceful utterances of an unrequited passion, but he speaks of it as the torment of his life. A natural restlessness drove him from the city to solitude, and from solitude to the city—a wanderer from one to another of his numerous habitations. He lived without the ties of domestic life; and the illicit connection he had formed at one period of his youth, with a person of inferior station, by whom he had two children, was his humiliation and his bane. His vanity was easily irritated, and never satisfied, even by the homage paid to his genius. His friendships, which touched the most amiable and interesting part of his character, were cut short by premature deaths — insomuch that, at the age of seventy, Boccaccio alone remained to be the confidant of his sorrows. Something of melancholy mingled itself, even from his earliest years, with the consciousness of power, the love of nature, and the current of his philosophy. The shortness of life, the mutability of fortune, the caducity of fame, the disappointments of love, were the perpetual subjects of his meditations: and although the latest efforts of his muse were entitled "Triumphs," they describe rather the triumphs of fate and death over the destinies of man. Pro-

bably there is some affectation of sadness in his writings; and he indulged his querulous disposition by translating it into language. Free alike from the misfortunes and austerity of his more illustrious countryman Dante, Petrarch must have enjoyed life much more than he would have posterity believe. But the touches of sentiment, whether perfectly genuine or not, with which all his writings abound, have obtained more readers for him, and more sympathy, than the gaiety and gladness of a livelier muse would have secured.

It has been finely said of Dante, that "The highest of all his gifts were the lofty mind and the lordly genius, and that thirst of excellence, which is not satisfied by any present things, but pursues its ends in the eternity of the future and the ideal effigies of the past."[1] With no lordly genius, but with a larger experience of the world, Petrarch aspired, like Dante, to the religious life. His piety was fervent and pure, though not ascetic. It was his wont to interrupt the few hours of sleep he allowed himself to repeat his midnight prayer. He lived and died in a Christian spirit; and if some morbid affections disturbed his composure, or some disappointments interrupted his happiness, the enigmas of life resolved themselves for him in an unshaken trust in God, and an unclouded hope of a better life. His character cannot be better or more favourably described than in the noble words applied to him by Mr Wordsworth in the most eloquent of his prose writings:[2] "He was a man of disciplined spirit, who withdrew from the too busy world—not out of indifference to its welfare, or to

[1] Capponi, i. 310.

[2] The pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra.

forget its concerns, but retired for wider compass of eye-sight, that he might comprehend and see in just proportions and relations; knowing, above all, that he who hath not made himself master of his own mind must look beyond it only to be deceived."

It is remarkable that Petrarch, though gifted with genius and power of mind far below that of Dante, exercised a much wider influence over his own age, and enjoyed a greater popularity, than the illustrious Florentine, whom all later times acknowledge as supreme. He had, in truth, nothing of that objective faculty which engraves upon the mind in ineffaceable lines the mystic vision of the terrible and the sublime. As the ages roll on, Dante loses nothing of his power over the imagination and thought of mankind: meanwhile, it is only the extreme beauty and melody of his language that keep Petrarch's poetry alive. But in their own times it was otherwise. The fourteenth century failed to comprehend its greatest poet. Boccaccio seems to be the first who understood his superlative eminence. Petrarch spoke to them in more familiar tones. He was a man of the world, mingling in all the society of his age. Dante was an exile and a solitary, who spake as one that came from beyond the grave; but what he spake was for all time.

CHAPTER II.

THE "EPISTLE TO POSTERITY."

THE most pleasing form of biography is that in which a man retraces the events of his own life and the incidents that have formed his character, more especially in his earlier years, of which no other record might exist. Petrarch has left us such a record in his "Epistle to Posterity," written, it is believed, in the year 1370, when he had completed the sixty-sixth year of his age. I shall therefore select this document as the first specimen of his narrative powers, for it places the whole of his earlier career at once before the reader; though it passes over, in significant silence, many important incidents and transactions to which I shall have occasion to revert. There is some doubt as to the date of this composition; for, although it breaks off abruptly at his forty-seventh year, there are expressions in it which prove that it was written at a much later period. For instance, it was not till 1367 that Pope Urban V. returned to Rome, but came back to Avignon in 1370—a fact referred to in the letter. Indeed this reference shows what was uppermost in the poet's mind whilst he was writing it.

FRANCIS PETRARCH—TO POSTERITY—GREETING.

"Perhaps, future reader, you may have heard somewhat about me, doubtful though it may be whether a name so humble and obscure as mine is likely to travel far in point either of time or space. Perhaps, even, you may wish to know what sort of man I was, or what was the fate of my works, and of those in particular whose reputation may have reached you, or whose name, however faintly, you may have heard.

"As to the first point, indeed, men's opinions will differ; for nearly every one speaks pretty much, not as truth but as inclination urges: there are no bounds either to eulogy or to blame. One of the human family like yourself, I was but a child of earth and mortal; of an origin neither particularly illustrious nor humble, my family, as Augustus Cæsar says of himself, was ancient. Nature gave me neither a bad nor an immodest disposition, had not the contagion of social intercourse injured it. Youth deceived me; manhood carried me away; but old age corrected me, and by experience taught me thoroughly that truth which I had long before studied, namely, that youth and pleasure are vanities. Of a truth the Fashioner of every age and time suffers poor mortals, who are puffed up about nothing, at times to go astray, that they may realise, though late, the remembrance of their sins.

"My body, when I was a young man, was not remarkable for strength, but had acquired considerable dexterity. I do not pride myself on any excellence of form, beyond such as might be pleasing to a man of greener years. My complexion was lively, half-way between fair and dusk. My eyes were sparkling, and for a long time my sight was extremely keen, until it failed me unexpectedly when past my sixtieth year; so that I was forced, much against the grain, to have recourse to spectacles. Old age came at last upon a body which had never known what illness was, and besieged it with the accustomed array of diseases.

"I was born of honourable parents of the city of Florence.

Their fortune was scanty, and, to tell the truth, verging towards poverty; but they were exiles from their country. I was born in exile at Arezzo, on Monday, July 20, 1304. Riches I held in sovereign contempt, not because I did not wish to have them, but because I hated the labour and anxiety which are the inseparable companions of wealth. I cared not for abundance of sumptuous repasts; on the contrary, with humble fare and common food I led a more enjoyable life than all the successors of Apicius, with their most exquisite dishes. Banquets, as they are called—or rather eating entertainments, inimical alike to modesty and good manners—have always been displeasing to me. I have counted it an irksome and a useless thing to invite others to such gatherings, and no less so to be invited by others. But to associate with my friends has been so agreeable to me, that I have held nothing more grateful than their arrival, nor have ever willingly broken bread without a companion. Nothing displeased me more than show, not only because it is bad and contrary to humility, but because it is irksome and an enemy of repose. In youth I felt the pains of love, vehement in the extreme, but constant to one object and honourable; and I should have felt them longer had not death —bitter, indeed, but useful—extinguished the flame as it was beginning to subside. As for the looser indulgences of appetite, would indeed that I could say I was a stranger to them altogether; but if I should so say, I should lie. This I can safely affirm, that although I was hurried away to them by the fervour of my age and temperament, their vileness I have always inwardly execrated. Soon, indeed, as I approached my fortieth year, while I still retained sufficient ardour and vigour, I repelled these weaknesses entirely from my thoughts and my remembrance, as if I had never known them. And this I count among my earliest happy recollections, thanking God, who has freed me, while yet my powers were unimpaired and strong, from this so vile and always hateful servitude.

"But I pass on to other matters. I was conscious of pride in others, but not in myself; and insignificant as I might be

in reality, I was always more insignificant in my own estimation. My irritable temper often injured myself, but it never injured others. Honourable and trusty friendships I keenly sought and cultivated—I fearlessly boast, that so far as I know, I speak the truth. Although easily provoked, I was ready to forget offences, and mindful of kind actions. I was favoured with the familiar intercourse of princes and kings, and with the friendships of the great to an extent that excited the envy of others. But it is the penalty of men who grow old, that they have to deplore the death of their friends. The most illustrious sovereigns of my own times loved and honoured me—why, I can hardly say; it is for them, not me, to explain: but as I lived with some of them on the same terms on which they lived with me, I suffered not at all from the eminence of their rank, but rather derived from it great benefits. Yet many of those whom I dearly loved, I avoided: so great was my innate love of liberty, that I studiously shunned any one whose very name might seem to restrict my freedom.

"My mind was rather well balanced than acute; adapted to every good and wholesome study, but especially prone to philosophy and poetry. And yet even this I neglected, as time went on, through the pleasure I took in sacred literature. I felt a hidden sweetness in that subject, which at times I had despised; and I reserved poetry as a mere accomplishment. I devoted myself singly, amid a multitude of subjects, to the knowledge of antiquity; since the age in which I lived was almost distasteful to me—so much so, that, had it not been for the love of those who were very dear to me, I should always have wished to have been born at any other time, and to forget the present, ever struggling to engraft myself upon the past. Accordingly I delighted in historians—not, however, being in any way the less offended at their contradictions, but following, when in doubt, that path which verisimilitude or the authority due to the writer pointed out.

"As a speaker, some have said I was clear and powerful; but, as it seemed to myself, weak and obscure. Nor indeed in ordinary conversation with my friends or acquaintances

did I ever aspire to eloquence; and I wonder that Augustus Cæsar took pains to excel in conversation. But when the subject itself, or the place, or the hearer seemed otherwise to demand it, I made somewhat of an effort—though with what success I know not; let those judge of that in whose presence I spoke. So that I have lived well, I care but little how I talked: it is a windy sort of glory to seek fame from the mere glitter of words.

"My time, whether by fortune or inclination, was thus divided. The first year of my life, and that not wholly, I spent at Arezzo, where nature first made me see the light; the six following years at Incisa, a small estate of my father's, fourteen miles from Florence. My eighth year, after my mother had been recalled from exile, I spent at Pisa; my ninth and subsequent years in transalpine Gaul, on the left bank of the Rhone. Avignon was the city's name, where the Roman Pontiff maintains, and has long maintained, the Church of Christ; although a few years ago Urban V. seemed to have returned to his true home. But his intention miscarried, even in his lifetime, for (what affects me most) he gave it up, as if repenting of his good work. Had only he lived a little longer, he would doubtless have known what I thought of his departure. The pen was already in my hands, when suddenly he found his glorious resolution cut short with his life. Alas! how happily might he have died before the altar of Peter, and in his own home! For whether his successors had remained in the august see, and completed the work he would have begun, or whether they had departed from it, his merit would have been the more illustrious, and their fault the more conspicuous to the world. But this is a tedious and irrelevant complaint.

"There, then, by the banks of that windy river, I spent my boyhood under my parents' care, and afterwards the whole period of my early youth, abandoned to my own caprices, not, however, without long intervals of absence. For during this time I stayed for four whole years at Carpentras, a small town lying near Avignon on the east; and in these two places I learned a smattering of grammar, and

as much of dialectics and rhetoric as the age could afford—as much, that is to say, as is wont to be taught in the schools; though how little that is, you know, dear reader, well enough. Thence I went to Montpelier to study law, where I spent another four years. Thence to Bologna; and there I remained three years, and attended lectures on the whole *corpus* of civil law; being then a young man of great promise, as many thought, if I persevered in my work. But I abandoned that study altogether; and shortly afterwards I lost my parents. I abandoned it, not because the authority of the laws was irksome to me, which doubtless is great, and redolent of that Roman antiquity in which I delight; but because the practice of those laws is depraved by the wickedness of men. I was disgusted at the thought of having to study thoroughly that which I was resolved not to turn to dishonourable, and could scarcely turn to honourable, uses, for such prudery would have been attributed to ignorance. Accordingly, in my twenty-second year I returned home. By home I mean that exile at Avignon, where I had been since the close of my childhood; for custom is second nature. There I had already begun to be known, and my acquaintance to be sought by men of eminence, though why, I confess now I know not, and wonder. At that time, indeed, I was not surprised at seeming to myself, after the fashion common to men of my age, well worthy of all honour. I was sought after, above all, by the illustrious and noble family of the Colonnas, who then frequented—I should rather say adorned—the Court of Rome. Especially, I was invited, and I was held in honour—undeserved, certainly, at that time, if not also now—by that illustrious and incomparable man, Giacomo Colonna, then Bishop of Lombes, whose equal I know not if I have seen, or am likely to see. In Gascony, at the foot of the Pyrenees, I spent an almost heavenly summer, in the delightful society of my lord and our companions—so delightful that I always sigh when thinking of that time. Returning thence, I remained for many years with his brother John, the Cardinal Colonna, not, as it were, under a patron, but under a father—nay, not

even that, say rather a most affectionate brother, with whom I lived as at home and in my own house.

"At that time a youthful longing drove me to travel through France and Germany; and although other reasons were invented, in order to recommend my going in the eyes of my elders, yet the real reason was my ardour and eagerness for new scenes. In that journey I first saw Paris, and took delight in finding out for myself what reports were true and what were false about that city. Returning thence, I went to Rome, a city I had longed to see from my infancy. Stephen Colonna, the noble-minded father of that family, and a man equal to any one of the ancients, I loved so dearly, and was so kindly welcomed by him in return, that there was scarcely any difference between myself and any one of his sons. The love and affection of this excellent man continued towards me in unbroken tenor to the last hour of his life, and survive in me still, nor shall ever desert me till I die.

"Returning again from Rome, and being ill able to endure the hatred and weariness implanted in my mind in that most wearisome abode of Avignon, seeking some byway of retirement, as a port of refuge, I found a valley, tiny in size, but solitary and agreeable, called Vaucluse, fifteen miles from Avignon, where the Sorgia, the king of streams, takes its source. Charmed with the sweetness of the spot, I betook myself thither with my books. It would be a long story were I to proceed to trace at length my life there for many, many years. The sum of all is this, that nearly every work that I have published was either finished, or begun, or conceived there. Those works have been so numerous as to exercise and fatigue me even to this day. For my mind, like my body, was remarkable rather for dexterity than strength; and thus I found many things easy to meditate, which I neglected afterwards as difficult to carry out. Here the very aspect of the neighbourhood suggested to me to attempt a bucolic poem, a pastoral, as well as the two books on 'Solitary Life' dedicated to Philip, a man great at all times, but then a humble bishop of Cavaillon, now the bishop of a much greater diocese, and a cardinal, who is now

the sole survivor of all my old friends, and who loved, and still loves me, not episcopally, so to speak, as Ambrosius loved Augustine, but as a brother.

"As I roamed about those hills, on the sixth day of the Great Week, it occurred to me, and I determined, to write a poem in heroic verse on Scipio Africanus the Elder. Him, I mean, whose marvellous name was always dear to me from my first boyhood. What I then began, ardent with the impulse of the moment, I soon discontinued under the distraction of other cares; but from the name of the subject I gave the title of 'Africa' to the book—a work, which, I know not by what fortune, its own or mine, was a favourite with many before it was generally known.

"While I was thus spinning out my leisure in that retreat, on one and the same day I received letters both from the Senate at Rome and from the Chancellor of the University of Paris, sending rival invitations to me—the former from Rome, the latter from Paris—to accept the laurel crown of poetry. Elated with pride, as was natural with a young man at these proposals, and judging myself worthy of the honour, inasmuch as men of such eminence had thought so, yet weighing not my own merit, but the testimonies of others, I hesitated, nevertheless, for a while as to which invitation I should prefer to accept. On this matter I wrote to Cardinal Colonna, whom I have mentioned, asking his advice; for he was so near a neighbour, that although I had written to him late, I received his answer before nine o'clock the next day. I followed the advice he gave me, and my answers to him are still extant. Accordingly I set out; and although, as is the way with young men, I was a very partial judge of my own productions, still I scrupled to follow the testimony given by myself, or of those by whom I was invited—though doubtless they would not have invited me, had they not judged me worthy of the honour thus offered. I determined, therefore, to land first at Naples, where I sought out that distinguished king and philosopher, Robert—not more illustrious as a sovereign than as a man of letters, and unique

in his age as a king and a friend of science and virtue—for the purpose of enabling him to express his personal opinion about me. His flattering estimate of me, and the kindly welcome he gave me, are matters now of wonder to me; and you, reader, if you had seen it, would wonder too. When he heard the cause of my arrival, he was marvellously delighted, reflecting as he did on my youthful confidence, and thinking perhaps that the honour which I was seeking was not without some advantage to his own reputation, inasmuch as I had chosen him of all men as the sole competent judge of my abilities. Why should I say more? After innumerable colloquies on various subjects; and after having shown to him the 'Africa,' with which he was so delighted as to ask me, as a great kindness, to dedicate it to himself—a request which I could not, and certainly did not wish to, refuse—he appointed a certain day for the matter on which I had come, and detained me from noon till evening. And as the time fell short from the abundance of matter, he did the same thing on the two following days, and thus for three whole days I shook off my ignorance, and on the third day he adjudged me worthy of the laurel crown. He offered it to me at Naples, and even urged me with entreaties to accept it. My affection for Rome prevailed over the gracious solicitation of so illustrious a king; and thus, seeing my purpose was inflexible, he gave me letters and despatches to the Senate of Rome, in which he expressed his judgment of me in highly flattering terms. And, indeed, what was then the judgment of the king agreed with that of many others, and especially with my own, though at this day I differ from the estimate then formed of me by him, as well as by myself and others. Affection for me and the partiality of the age swayed him more than respect for the truth. So I came [to Rome], and however unworthy, yet trusting and relying upon so high a sanction, I received the laurel crown, while I was still but an unfledged scholar, amid the utmost rejoicings of the Romans who were able to take part in the ceremony. I have written letters on this subject both in verse and in prose. This laurel crown gained for me no knowledge, but a

great deal of envy. But this story also has strayed beyond its limits.

"Departing from Rome, I went to Parma, and stayed some time with the Lords of Correggio, who were the best of men and most liberally disposed towards myself, but sadly at enmity among each other; and who at that time were ruling in such a fashion as the city had never experienced before within the memory of man, nor I believe will ever in this age experience again. Mindful of the honour I had accepted, and anxious lest it might seem to have been conferred upon an unworthy recipient, having one day, after climbing by chance a mountain in the neighbourhood, been suddenly struck with the appearance of the place, I turned my pen once more to the interrupted poem of 'Africa,' and finding that fervour rekindled which had appeared quite laid to sleep, I wrote a little that very day. I added afterwards a little day by day, until, after returning to Parma and obtaining a retired and quiet house, which I subsequently bought and still retain, my intense ardour, which even now I am amazed at, enabled me, before long, to bring the work to a conclusion. Returning thence, I sought once more the Sorgia and my transalpine solitude, just as I was turning my back on my four-and-thirtieth year;[1] having spent a long while at Parma and Verona, being welcomed with affection everywhere, thank God—far more so, indeed, than I deserved.

"After a long while having gained the favour of a most worthy man, and one whose equal, I think, did not exist among the nobles of that age—I mean Giacomo di Carrara—I was urged by him with such pressing entreaties, addressed to me for several years both through messengers and letters even across the Alps, when I was in those parts, and wherever I chanced to be in Italy, to embrace his friendship, that I resolved at length to pay him a visit, and to discover the reason of this urgent solicitation from a man so eminent and a stranger to myself. I came, therefore, tardily indeed,

[1] This date is incorrect. Petrarch was thirty-eight when he returned to Vaucluse in 1342.

to Padua, where I was received by that man of illustrious memory not only with courtesy, but as happy spirits are welcomed in heaven; with such abundant joy and such inestimable kindness and affection, that I must fain suppress it in silence, being hopeless of doing justice to it in words. Knowing, among many other things, that I had embraced from boyhood the clerical life, and with a view to attach me the more closely not only to himself, but also to his country, he caused me to be appointed a Canon of Padua; and, in short, if his life had only been longer, there would then have been an end of my wandering and my travels. But alas! there is nothing lasting among mortals; and if aught of sweetness chanced to present itself in life, soon comes the bitter end, and it is gone. When, ere two years had been completed, God took him from me, his country, and the world, He took away one of whom neither I, nor his country, nor the world (my love to him does not deceive me) were worthy. And although he was succeeded by a son, conspicuous alike for his sagacity and renown, and who, following in his father's footsteps, always held me in affection and honour, nevertheless, when I had lost one whose age was more congenial to my own, I returned again to France, not caring to remain where I was, my object being not so much the longing to revisit places I had seen a thousand times before, as a desire, common to all men in trouble, of ministering to the *ennui* of life by a change of scene."

With these words ends the fragment, for it is but a fragment, which Petrarch has bequeathed to us of his life. He omits in it all mention, save a bare allusion, to his passion for Laura and his Italian poetry. He commemorates in it his early successes with pardonable vanity. But he reserves his warmest and most enthusiastic language for his illustrious friends. The later portion of his life, which connected him with the political events of the age, is left untold.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY LIFE.

It would be superfluous to dwell at greater length on the events of his childhood, or on the genealogies of the great poet, which have taxed the ingenuity of the Italian commentators. His father, Petracco, was a notary of Florence, who had joined the party of the White Guelfs, and, under a false accusation of malversation, was driven from the city by the hostile factions in the spring of 1302, together with some six hundred honourable citizens, of whom Dante Alighieri was one. He fled to Arezzo, and there, two years later, on Monday the 20th July, at dawn, Francesco Petrarcha, as he was called, was born. His childhood was spent at Incisa, a small property about fourteen miles from Florence, to which his mother obtained leave to return. But the persecution still continuing, Petracco, the father, migrated in 1313 to Avignon, to which city Clement V. had recently removed the Papal Court. Young Petrarch was sent to a school at Carpentras, in the neighbourhood, kept by a Tuscan scholar named Convennole, where he remained four years, and where he already distinguished himself in rhetoric.

This early exile produced a marked effect on the des-

tiny of Petrarch. Although born, properly speaking, a citizen of Florence, it severed him from that brilliant and turbulent republic; and it is remarkable that he was better known and more welcome in any part of Italy—in Naples, in Rome, in Padua, in Venice—than in Tuscany, which he never inhabited. Provence, Italianised by the Papal migration to Avignon, became in more senses than one his adopted home. There he followed his studies, at Carpentras and Montpelier. There he entered into the world; and in spite of the virulent denunciations which it was the fashion of Italian patriotism to heap upon the Court of Avignon, it cannot be doubted that much of the most brilliant society of the age was collected in the Papal city, and probably afforded to Petrarch an easier access than he would have found to it in Rome. There too, in the immediate neighbourhood of Carpentras, he sought in after-years that secluded valley, which was the retreat of his studious hours and the scene of his impassioned regrets; insomuch that to this day the memory of Petrarch is nowhere more fondly preserved than by the sources of the fountain of Vaucluse. His father intended him for the profession of the Bar, and he was sent to the University of Montpelier for four years (1319-1323) to study the Pandects. From thence he proceeded to Bologna, where three more years were spent in these ungrateful studies, to which, as he tells us, he could never bend his mind. "In that pursuit," he says, "I cannot be said to have spent seven years, but to have lost them." And although success was promised to him by his professors, he disdained to seek it, holding that whatever may be the majesty of legal science, the practice of the courts was not to be carried on without some

sacrifice of honesty and independence. His father's death in 1326 released him from the obligation to follow this course of life; and as his mother, Eletta Canigiani, died about the same time, he found himself, with an only brother, his own master. His earliest known composition was an elegy on his mother's death in Latin verse, not remarkable for beauty, or even correctness, yet even here he expressed the thought that his mother and himself would live for ever in that verse—

"Vivemus pariter, memorabimur ambo."

These lines appear to have been written on the fly-leaf of a manuscript Virgil, to which he was much attached. The volume was afterwards stolen, but recovered under singular circumstances.

It is not easy to discover what were Petrarch's means of subsistence. His father, a banished notary, was never rich, and seems to have left him nothing but a very choice copy of some of the works of Cicero—a treasure he valued above all others, for the rhythm of Ciceronian prose was the enchantment of his life, and dearer to him than all the songs of Italy. It is impossible to say how he lived, for we find him at all times in the best society, travelling great distances, and leading a perfectly independent life, without any apparent means of improving his income. It was not until a much later period of his life that he was enabled to hold ecclesiastical benefices that enriched him.

Probably he owed the position in which we find him at two-and-twenty to the liberal patronage of the Colonna family, for he had formed at the University of Bologna an intimate friendship with Giacomo Colonna, afterwards

Bishop of Lombes. His talents and amiable disposition were not unknown to the Cardinal, John Colonna, brother of Giacomo, and he was received on his return to Avignon on the footing of a member rather than a dependant of that illustrious house. But it was not until 1330 that he appears to have taken up his residence in the Colonna Palace. He had visited Lombes in the interval; and, according to one account, had made a journey to northern Europe. At that time, too, his great poetical talents had not made their mark, for it was not until some years after he conceived his passion for Laura that he began to write sonnets to her. In one of the earliest of them he reproaches himself for not having sung her praises and her beauty before. The mode and means of living he enjoyed during this interval, from 1326 to 1330, have not been explained by his biographers.

It is amusing to trace the first appearance of the future poet, philosopher, and politician in the great world of that day, as a young gentleman of fashion.

"Don't you recollect," he wrote years afterwards to his brother, Gherardo, who had become a Carthusian monk, "what pains, what useless pains, we took to preserve the exquisite whiteness of our linen; what dressing and undressing there was, morning and evening; what fear lest a breath of air should disturb the elegance of our curls, or a passing horse splash our perfumed and gorgeous cloaks, or derange their folds? Why all this anxiety? That we might please the eyes of others. And whose eyes? The eyes of many who were displeasing enough to ourselves. But then our shoes! How they pricked the feet they were meant to protect! As for mine, they would have been useless if I had not, under the pressure of dire necessity, preferred the sacri-

fices of appearances to that of my own joints and nerves. And the curling-irons! How often were our slumbers disturbed by that operation! What pirate could have squeezed and tortured us more than we squeezed ourselves with our own hands? The morning light showed us nocturnal furrows in the glass, so that if we wished to show our heads, we had to hide our faces."[1]—Ep. Famil., x. 5.

The key to Petrarch's success in life, which raised him at so early an age from a humble to an enviable position, must be sought in his social qualities, his refinement, and his cultivation. He contrived, in every phase of his life, to be, as moderns say, "in fashion." Though not without independence of character, as will be seen in the sequel, he never seems to have felt like Dante that it was an intolerable misery to eat another man's bread or mount another man's stairs. He began life as a man of the world, open to every kindly influence, ardent in friendship, enthusiastic in his patriotism, and exceedingly prone, as the result proved, to fall in love.

It is certainly much easier to recognise the impassioned admirer of Laura in this young man of fashion and society, at three-and-twenty, with his pointed shoes and frizzled hair, than in the sage, the philosopher, and the poet, handed down to us by tradition, in the garb of the Church and the garland of the Laureate; and it is an anachronism to confound the enthusiastic impulses of youth with the graver emotions and reflections of mature

[1] This letter, in which Petrarch reminds his brother of their youthful follies and gaieties, was addressed to Gherardo after he had been seven years a Carthusian monk; and he contrasts with amusing solemnity their boyish dandyism with the tonsure and the sandals of monastic life.

life. Here, in his early years, we catch a glimpse of him in the follies and gaieties of his age. But it was his lot to allow that youthful passion to "grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength," until it was inseparably blended in after-years with his literary life, and with his fame.

CHAPTER IV.

PETRARCH AND LAURA.

On the 6th April 1327, which was the Monday in Holy Week, Petrarch saw, in the church of the Nuns of St Clara at Avignon, the lady who stamped at a glance her image for ever on his genius and his life.

What man is there of tenderness and imagination who does not look back to "some particular star"—the morning-star of life—which shed an influence over his earlier years that no time can obliterate, and still lingers, though it be in the setting, upon the horizon of the past? To Petrarch that influence lasted always; it rose in the fervour of youth; it strengthened in the maturity of manhood; it became his art, his philosophy, his religion; neither Time nor Death quenched its radiance; and the visionary glory spread and grew until it lost itself in dreams of heaven.

Laura de Noves (for that was the name of her family) had married in 1325 Hugo de Sade, a gentleman of the Avignonais, whose family flourishes there to this day. Laura was born in 1307; she was consequently three years younger than Petrarch, and just twenty when first he saw her. These facts are attested beyond all doubt

by documents in the archives of the De Sade family; by her will, made a few days before her death, in 1348; and by her tomb in the sepulchral vault of the family in the Church of the Cordeliers at Avignon. It is therefore useless to follow the speculations which have been published as to the person of Laura, and, indeed, as to her existence. The known facts of her life, few in number, correspond exactly with the details which may be collected from Petrarch's own Sonnets and Letters. Laura de Sade was beautiful, and she was virtuous. Her husband is said to have been a jealous man—not unnaturally, if the passion of a poet for his wife made her immortally famous as that poet's mistress. But, in truth, there is nothing to show that Laura was at all sensible to the passion she inspired. She was, as far as we know, a very good wife to Hugo de Sade; and we have Petrarch's own authority for the fact that she presented her husband with a large family of children. The reader of Petrarch's amatory verses, and of these pages dedicated to his memory, will seek in vain for any incidents of romance to give a colour of reality to those endless effusions of the poet's heart and lyre. The merest trifles, such as the passage of his lady's shadow, the dropping of her glove, the scent of a flower, the rustle of a laurel bush, are all that Petrarch's imagination fed on; and it may be doubted whether he was ever honoured by a nearer approach to her personal favour or even acquaintance.

Romantic devotion to a well-known beauty was a characteristic of the age of chivalry, not yet extinct. It inspired the Troubadours of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as it had fired the legendary prowess of King

Arthur's knights. It mingled with the feats of arms in the tilt-yard, and with the prayers and ritual of the sanctuary. Surrounded and adorned by this atmosphere of dutiful and courteous admiration, the part of a "Queen of Beauty" was one to which women of the purest lives might by the custom of the times aspire. The romances of chivalry breathe no other spirit; and the same ideal enthusiasm lingered in the world long enough to be ridiculed by Cervantes, and even to inspire the "toasts" of the last century.

In Petrarch this ideal passion took the shape, not of knightly exercises, but of poetry. He was one of the men gifted with an inimitable art of expression, who can create and perpetuate by language emotions more intense and lasting than their own. Without disputing the reality of his tenderness for Laura, it is impossible not to see that it was prodigiously enhanced by the pleasure he found in transfusing it into verse. There is in the Canzoniere at least as much of the artist as of the lover; and the sonnets which record his sufferings at a separation from an unrelenting mistress, or his matured grief over her early grave, all partake of this artificial character. This, too, was in the spirit and taste of the age. Petrarch boasts in one of his letters that he copied and followed no one, and declared that he would not read the great poem of Dante for many years, lest it should affect his own style. But he is the lineal descendant and direct offspring of the troubadours of Languedoc and Provence, and the earlier poets of Italy. In his own "Triumph of Love" he passes them all in review—Arnauld Daniel, Pierre Roger, De Marueil, Folquet of Marseilles, and Geoffrey Rudel; and in

Italy, Cino da Pistoia, Guittone d'Arezzo, Dante himself. The theme was the same; and although it cannot be said that the theory of Platonic love, which entered Italy from Greece in the fifteenth century, was familiar to these early poets, yet the spirit of devotion to the beautiful, the pure, and the true was allied in them to a simpler and a nobler faith than that of the Humanists of a later age. The highest and most perfect consecration of these sentiments is, no doubt, to be found in the 'Vita Nuova' of Dante, rising, as it were, by the steps of Paradise, to the beatific vision which is the transfiguration of love. Petrarch, at his loftiest flight, reaches no such level of grandeur and power; but then he retains a graceful familiarity, a dramatic charm, a perfection of language, which were sometimes lost in the sublime depths of the Dantesque imagery.

It is an anachronism to ascribe the diffusion of these sentiments in the Italy of the fourteenth century to the dialogues or influence of Plato. The Greek language was still unknown to the most learned men of that century. No Greek manuscripts had been collected. Here and there, the troubles of the East sent some wandering scholar, like Barlaam or Pilatus, across the Adriatic, who was hailed as a marvel. Nothing is more strange than this total severance of the Latin and the Hellenic races. Aristotle was only known in the schools of the West through an Arabic translation, illustrated by Arabian commentators. Plato was only dimly seen by the reflected light of the Ciceronian dialogues, and by the traces of the Alexandrian school of philosophy in the early Christian Fathers. Dim as that light was, Petrarch followed it. It is curious to remark how little

effect was ever produced on his mind by the Aristotelian traditions or the reigning philosophy of the schools. Averroes, especially, he regarded as a pestilent heretic; and one of his most vehement controversial passages was directed against four young Venetian gentlemen professing an unbounded respect for that commentator, who may justly be regarded as one of the founders of sceptical and negative opinions. Petrarch, on the contrary, held a highly spiritual and Christian creed. For him, this world, this life, were but the first steps on an infinite scale leading from earth to heaven. Nothing in humanity is complete. Nothing in Deity is deficient; and the spirit of Love, interfused through all the thoughts and actions of our being, is the guiding-star, the link, the clue, which raises the corruptible to the incorruptible, the mortal to immortality, the soul of man to its divine source in God.

These sentiments, which are nearly akin to those of Dante in the scheme of his great work, gave Petrarch a lofty pre-eminence over all his predecessors save one. He was not only a poet penning a sonnet to the eyebrow of his mistress, but a sage and a philosopher.

Italy possessed, in truth, an entire cycle of amatory poets, dating from the Sicilian Ciullo d'Alcamo at the close of the twelfth century, down to the constellation of the friends and early companions of Dante, in which the two Guidos, Guido Cavalcanti and Guido Guinicelli, were the most conspicuous stars.

"Thus hath one Guido from another ta'en
The praise of speech, and haply one hath passed
Through birth, who from their nest will chase the twain."
—Purgatorio, B. xi.

The English reader may make the acquaintance of these charming writers in a volume published in 1861 by Mr D. G. Rossetti, who has transfused the grace and sentiment of medieval Italy with singular success into the measures of our own tongue. He enumerates no less than forty-four writers of vernacular poetry, all belonging to the thirteenth century, of whose works some specimens have been preserved in print: probably many more existed in manuscript. Love was their common theme, sometimes treated with gaiety and playfulness, more often with an austere and devout spirit. All these poets belonged to the age preceding that of Petrarch, although some of them may have been personally known to him: thus Francesco da Barberino was born in 1264, the year before Dante's birth, but he lived to be eighty-four, and consequently flourished in Petrarch's lifetime. Cino da Pistoia (whose name in full was Guittoncino de' Sinibaldi) was born at Pistoia in 1270, five years later than Dante. Of him it was that Dante said in his treatise on vernacular eloquence that "those who have most sweetly and nobly written poems in modern Italian are Cino da Pistoia and *a friend of his*"—the friend being Dante himself. The canzone Cino addressed to Dante on the death of Beatrice is well known. Cino was a Ghibelline, sometimes persecuted and exiled; but he was also a successful lawyer and professor of the laws at Siena, Perugia, and Florence. It is doubtful whether Petrarch was ever one of his pupils: but as he only died in 1336, Petrarch must have been well acquainted with his fame and his poetry; and there is much in Cino's lamentation for his deceased Selvaggia which anticipates Petrarch's querulous strains. With infinitely less of poetic

powers and grace, the vein of thought and feeling is the same—it was the fashion of the age. These scattered fragments of a poetic age have a charm of their own. They are entirely devoid of the affectation and antitheses which are the blemishes of Petrarch's Canzoniere. They are far more simple and natural. Perhaps they speak the language of more genuine tenderness and passion. But they want the exquisite refinement of style that Petrarch alone attained; and that one quality embalmed his memory to imperishable fame, whilst a host of men, gifted perhaps with scarcely inferior genius, but inferior to him in *art*, have been forgotten by the world.

Two hundred years later, precisely the same taste and spirit revived—and revived in England under the courtly reign of Elizabeth. Indeed our very first sonnet writer, Lord Surrey, who fell a victim to the jealousy or caprice of Henry VIII. in 1547, in the thirty-first year of his age, was a child of the same school. Petrarch's 249th sonnet, "Zephiro torna, e'l bel tempo rinasce," was the parent of Surrey's charming lines:—

"The soote season, that bud and blome forth brings,
With grene hath clad the hill, and eke the vale;
The nightingale with fethers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale:
Somer is come, for every spray now springs.
The hart hath hong his old hed on the pale:
The buck in brake his winter coate he flings:
The fishes flete with new repayred scale;
The adder all her slough away she flings;
The swift swalow pursueth the flies smale:
The busy bee her hony now she mings.
Winter is worne that was the flowers bale."

Sir Thomas Wyat, who is styled with Lord Surrey

a father of English classical poetry, imitated Petrarch still more closely, and translated many of his sonnets. The old author of the 'Art of English Poetry' (quoted by Warton) says of these worthies: "Henry Earle of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyat, between whom I find very little differences, I repute them for the two chief lanterns of light to all others that have since employed their powers upon English poesie; their conceits were lofty, their styles stately, their conveyance clearly, their terms proper, their metre sweet and well-proportioned, in all imitating very naturally and studiously their master Francis Petrarcha." They were the first genuine imitators of the Italian style in England. I say nothing of Chaucer, whose genius was far more original and national, though Chaucer was a contemporary of Petrarch, and was supposed to have met the great poet in Italy. But Chaucer's mission to Italy occurred in 1372, when Petrarch was an old man living in the Euganean hills, far from the world. There is scarcely a trace of Petrarch's somewhat morbid cast of thought, or of his philosophy, in the lively, shrewd, and humorous pictures of life which Chaucer drew; and whatever he derived from Italy was drawn far less from the influence of Petrarch than from that of Boccaccio, with whom, indeed, Chaucer had much in common.[1]

[1] The intimacy of Petrarch and Boccaccio is one of the most interesting in the annals of lettered friendships: the difference in their ages was just sufficient to give Petrarch the authority of father, and to inspire Boccaccio with the sympathy of a younger brother. He says in the 8th book, "De casibus virorum illustrium," speaking of Petrarch: "In somnis sibi visum adspectu modestum et moribus, venustâ facie ac lato pallore conspicuâ, virenti laureâ insignitum, ac pallio amictum regio, summâ reverentiâ dignum." Squarzafichi, who quotes this passage, adds: "Tanta fuit vis ejus amoris, ut alter

Sir Philip Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella," published in 1583, was an echo of the same strain of romance and unsatisfied passion. Spenser is full of the genuine Italian grace of love, chivalry, and romance; his "Amoretti" are pure Petrarchan; but Drummond of Hawthornden is the most complete representation of Petrarch in English literature. He had wooed and won an accomplished lady who died when the wedding-day was fixed. Drummond was then thirty-eight years old: he survived this melancholy event twenty-six years, and never ceased to pour fresh tears over the tomb of his beloved mistress. Life was to him henceforth "a nought, a thought, a masquerade of dreams." His soul was wrapt in the great mysteries of love and grief, of time and death; he rose on the wings of poetry from earthly things to heaven, and one of his spiritual songs, "The Flowers of Zion," was written in the terza-rima of Petrarch's "Triomfi," from which much of it was borrowed. These were all the lineal descendants of the first Italian poets, dating from the thirteenth century.

It is impossible to rank Petrarch amongst the most original and self-created poets of the world. His early studies were governed by a passionate admiration for Cicero and Virgil, and these great writers are the models whom he imitated with imperfect success, both in prose and verse, in his philosophical essays and in his Eclogues and his "Africa." The love-songs of the troubadours of Southern France, and even Spain, bear a strong

alterius faciem in gemmâ annuli gestare, ipso (Boccatio) dicente in unâ suorum virorum epistolâ,

'Dulcis amice vale! tua te mihi semper imago
It præsens; mecumque sedet, mecumque quiescit;
Tu nunc reddo vices.'"

affinity to his own Canzoniere; and, as we have just seen, the same vein had been successfully cultivated in the preceding generation by Guido Cavalcanti and by Dante himself in the 'Vita Nuova.' When his life assumed a more decided religious character, the influence of St Augustine may be clearly traced in his thoughts, and even in his style. These, no doubt, were his guiding-stars; but it is not too much to say that Petrarch surpassed them all in his constancy to a single theme, and in the incomparable art with which he wrought the vulgar tongue of Italy to the highest perfection of rhythm and elegance. There are still in existence in manuscript, notes that record the extraordinary labour he bestowed upon a single sonnet, and the change he introduced, sometimes by altering the position of a line, sometimes by the substitution of a more graphic word, to reach the perfection of expression. In this respect he may be compared to Virgil, and to Virgil alone: and like Virgil, he sometimes blushed to think that the last perfection of ideal refinement had not been reached, even in passages in which no other eye has found a flaw.

If the passion of Petrarch had had more sensual reality in it, it might have been less enduring. Its ideal character survived the vicissitudes of life, the decline of beauty, the advance of age, and death itself; for it was enshrined in thought and language, over which time had no power. For more than twenty years the poet continued to celebrate the charms of an adorable and unrelenting mistress. Laura was forty years of age when she died; but her death only gave a fresh theme to a disconsolate lover. Although they first met amid

the scenes of a gay and profligate court, they appear seldom to have held any personal intercourse. Petrarch was not admitted to her house. There is no evidence that she shared his tender sentiments, but the reverse. He describes her as indifferent to the charms of poetry and song. A veiled figure, intent, probably, on other affections and cares, haunted him like a spirit; but that spirit breathed life, not unmingled with suffering, into his heart, and burst forth in his verses with a splendour and a warmth not its own. There is not the smallest evidence that Laura de Sade returned or requited his passion. He speaks of her countenance as "severe," and this stern demeanour was only relaxed by a rare passing gleam of consideration and courtesy. In his letters he never mentions her at all, except on one occasion, when his friend Giacomo Colonna had rallied him playfully on the unsubstantial nature of the object of his affections, and hinted, as some critics have done in later times, that, except as an object of poetical enthusiasm, his Laura might have no real existence. To this Petrarch replied: "Look at what I suffer. To fall in love with a purely ideal object might be a folly, but to love as I do, without hope, is a scourge." In his "Triumph of Death," which I shall cite hereafter, he describes the interest felt by Laura in his fate in more tender language. But that was the dream of a poet after the death of his mistress, when he believed that the shadows and obscurities of the human heart had vanished in the light of eternity. On earth and in life an unfathomable abyss seemed to separate him from her. He loved as one might love an angel or a star. The poetic language in which he depicts her charms—the golden-threaded hair

—the angelic smile—the eyes that reflected the light of heaven — may be that of imagination or enthusiasm. But tradition can hardly err in ascribing to Laura de Sade uncommon beauty, though there are doubts of the authenticity of the portraits which exist of her. Petrarch states in his letters that he had known two great painters — Giotto and Simon Memmi; the latter undoubtedly gave a portrait of Laura to his friend, and received in return two complimentary sonnets. One can hardly recognise, in the portraits attributed to Memmi in the gallery of the Louvre, the traces of so great a beauty; and the bas-relief of Petrarch and Laura found at Siena is of still more questionable authenticity.

CHAPTER V.

PETRARCH AT VAUCLUSE.

THE passion which Petrarch had conceived for this lady, and perhaps the disappointments attending it, strengthened his taste for rural life and retirement; and he found at Vaucluse, within easy reach of Avignon, a spot singularly adapted to his convenience. The valley has been described with great force and fidelity by Ugo Foscolo:—

"The house of Petrarch at Vaucluse has disappeared, nor can his frequent descriptions help antiquarians to discover the site of his gardens; but the valley of Vaucluse is one of those works of nature which five centuries have been unable to disturb. On leaving Avignon, the eye of the traveller reposes on an expanse of beautiful meadow, till he arrives on a plain varied by numerous vineyards. At a short distance the hills begin to ascend, covered with trees, which are reflected on the Sorgia, the waters of which are so limpid, their course so rapid, and their sounds so soft, that the poet describes them truly when he says that 'they are liquid crystal, the murmurs of which mingle with the songs of birds to fill the air with harmony.' Its banks are covered with aquatic plants; and in those places where the falls or the rapidity of the current prevent their being distinguished, it seems to roll over a bed of green marble. Nearer the source the soil

is sterile; and, as the channel grows narrow, the waves break against the rocks, and roll in a torrent of foam and spray, glittering with the reflection of the prismatic colours. On advancing still further up the river, the traveller finds himself enclosed in a semicircular recess, formed by rocks inaccessible on the right, and abrupt and precipitous on the left, rising into obelisks, pyramids, and every fantastic shape, and from the midst of them a thousand rivulets descend. The valley is terminated by a mountain, perpendicularly scarped from the top to the bottom, and, through a natural porch of concentric arches, he enters a vast cavern, the silence and darkness of which are interrupted only by the murmuring and the sparkling of the waters in a basin, which forms the principal source of the Sorgia. This basin, the depth of which has never yet been fathomed, overflows in the spring, and it then sends forth its waters with such an impetuosity as to force them through a fissure in the top of the cavern, at an elevation of nearly a hundred feet on the mountain, whence they gradually precipitate themselves from height to height in cascades, sometimes showing and sometimes concealing, in their foam, the huge masses of rock which they hurry along. The roar of the torrents never ceases during the long rains, while it seems as if the rocks themselves were dissolved away, and the thunder re-echoed from cavern to cavern. The awful solemnity of this spectacle is varied by the rays of the sun, which, towards evening particularly, refract and reflect their various tints on the cascades. After the dog-days, the rocks become arid and black, the basin resumes its level, and the valley returns to a profound stillness."

The sources of the Sorgia had been well known to Petrarch from his earliest years. They were near Carpentras, where he was at school. They had been visited by his friend and patron, King Robert of Naples (to whom, in fact, the little principality belonged [1]), on his passage to the Court of Avignon. He fled there in youth to

[1] The Comté Venaissin and Provence had been ceded absolutely by Philip le Bel, in 1290, to Charles II., King Robert's father.

escape from the turmoil of society and the violence of his passion; and as he advanced in life, he made the retreat of Vaucluse the central seat of his contemplative life.

Let us go with Petrarch to "the sources of the Sorgia,[1] the well-known haven of his soul, where he was wont to wander solitary at evening, and in the morning the melancholy ripple of the stream against the bank found him there still." If we would meditate, it shall be "in that delightful valley,[2] under the morning shadows of the mountains, where the fountain gurgles from beneath the tangled roots, and over an hundred rocks, welling forth its silver waters and its many waves, which burst in loud rapidity down the glen, till they swell into an enchanting river. In this spot we will sit upon our chosen seats, under the shadow of the ivy, feeding our eyes with the sweet prospect. There we will task the fruitful powers of the mind, there read the secrets of the soul." There we may learn, as he says, "exigui laudasse silentia ruris." And whilst we recollect that

> "The unquiet man, through years of anxious breath,
> Still hastens death-ward: his best friend is Death!"

we shall remember that Petrarch had hopes and meditations which his Mago never knew; and that, whilst he sang of the troubled end of the Carthaginian warrior, the greater part of his own life was only agitated by sweet sorrows, or enlivened by pure joys.

> "I ever sought a life of solitude,
> This know the shores, and every lawn and wood:
> To fly from those deaf spirits and blind away,
> Who from the path of heaven have gone astray."[3]

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[1] Epist. Fam., lib. v. cap. 1. [2] Epist. Variar.
[3] Africa, lib. vi.

He gives a pleasing account of his first coming to Vaucluse, in a letter to one of his oldest friends, that shows the happy spirit in which he looked back upon the days of his youth, when years began to lie thick upon him. Guido Septimo, to whom it is addressed, had been the schoolfellow of Petrarch, and his brother Gerard: he afterwards became Archbishop of Genoa. His scholars never forgot the obligations they owed to that venerable tutor, Convennole, who was afterwards relieved by Petrarch at the expense of Cicero's treatise 'De Gloriâ.'

"You may recollect," says the poet, "that in the flower of our boyhood, when we studied together so happily, my father and your uncle, who were then about as old as we are now, happened to bring us with them to Carpentras, when your uncle, as a stranger, was seized with a violent desire to see the source of the Sorgia, which, though it has always been celebrated for itself, is now more known through my verses —if I may be allowed to boast of so small a matter to a friend. After many fears and admonitions from the best of mothers —mine in blood, but yours also in affection—we started with that excellent man whose name you bear, but whose acquirements and celebrity you have so greatly augmented. When we came to the fountain of the Sorgia (for I recollect it as if it were to-day), I was touched by the singular beauty of the spot, and I said, in my childish thoughts, 'This is a place most fitted to my tastes, and I should prefer it to the greatest cities.' Some time afterwards, we, who in our souls were never divided, were separated by the chances of life: you trod the forum, and struggled in debate; I sought for tranquillity in shady places: you strove for honourable wealth in the pathways of political distinction; and that very wealth which I despised and avoided pursued me into my most secret retreats and the recesses of the green woods. At times, however, you have sought a temporary haven from the storms of life in my

hermitage. . . . How often has the darkness of the evening found me in the fields afar off! how often have I risen in the silence of a summer night to offer up my prayers and midnight orisons to Christ; and then to steal forth alone, lest I should disturb the servants, heavy with slumber, to wander under the high moon, over the fields and mountains! If you ask me how I come to be so bold, I answer that I am not afraid of shadows; no wolves have ever been seen in this valley, and no one ever comes there who would do me any harm: I meet here and there a cowherd in the meadows, or a fisherman watching all night beside the stream, who salute me, and offer me much civility at all hours, because they know that I am on good terms with the lord of the soil." —Epist. Senil., x., ep. 2.

Here, then, we may most fitly place a few specimens of the poetry which has given to Petrarch his most enduring fame; for these verses were chiefly written under the influence of solitude, in that delightful spot; and he was never more entirely devoted to the objects of his passion and his art than when he lived there. But in translation from the Italian to another tongue these poems lose their greatest charm. The more austere Muse of England disclaims those hyperbolical expressions which are natural to the poets of the South; and though our language has a rhythm and a majesty of its own, it can hardly be said that any of his numerous translators have caught the melody of the verse of Petrarch.

Yet the following lines from one of the canzones may perhaps transport the reader to those pine-groves, among the rugged hills of Provence, beneath which the meditative poet loved to sit in the dreamy ecstasy of his passion:—

"Beneath each lofty pine and shady place
I stay my wanderings; with my mind I trace
In every rock her blessed countenance;
And when I rouse me from my wistful trance
I find my bosom melted by my love,
And cry, 'Ah, whither, whither dost thou rove?
Where art thou come, whence art thou separate?'
Thus in my fevered mind's perturbèd state
These fleeting dreams to fixèd thought return,
Myself forgotten, whilst for her I burn.
I feel that Love is close at hand—
So close that in my error lies
The ecstasy of my fond eyes.
On every side I see my Laura stand;
Did but the illusion last, no more could I demand.

Often, (yet who will credit my fond speech?)
In the clear waters, or the verdant lawn,
Or in the smooth stems of the glossy beech,
Or in the snow-white clouds of early morn,
I see her live, eclipsing with her charms
Leda's fair child, who set the world in arms,
As night-stars vanish in the light of dawn.
The more I wander in the world's rough ways—
The more o'er desert wastes my footstep strays—
The more my fancy her sweet form portrays.
Then, when the stern reality of Truth
Destroys the visions of my fervent youth,
I sit, a dead upon a living stone,
As one who thinks and grieves and writes alone."

Or in a more joyous mood, when Laura's presence animates the landscape:—

"Here stand we, Love, our glory to behold—
How, passing nature, lovely, high, and rare!
Behold! what showers of sweetness falling there!
What floods of light by heaven to earth unrolled!
How shine her robes, in purple, pearls, and gold,—

So richly wrought, with skill beyond compare!
How glance her feet!—her beaming eyes, how fair
Through the dark cloister which these hills enfold!
The verdant turf, and flowers of thousand hues,
Beneath yon oak's old canopy of state.
Spring round her feet to pay their amorous duty.
The heavens, in joyful reverence, cannot choose
But light up all their fires, to celebrate
Her praise, whose presence charms their awful beauty."

—MERIVALE.

Or in a more melancholy strain, when some solitary bird, twittering on the naked autumnal bough, touches his fancy:—

"Poor solitary bird, that pour'st thy lay,
Or haply mournest the sweet season gone:
As chilly night and winter hurry on,
And daylight fades, and summer flies away;
If, as the cares that swell thy little throat,
Thou knew'st alike the woes that wound my rest,
Oh, thou wouldst house thee in this kindred breast,
And mix with mine thy melancholy note.
Yet little know I ours are kindred ills:
She still may live the object of thy song:
Not so for me stern Death or Heaven wills!
But the sad season, and less grateful hour,
And of past joy and sorrow, thoughts that throng,
Prompt my full heart this idle lay to pour."

—LADY DACRE.

The two preceding sonnets illustrate one of the most pleasing characteristics of Petrarch's poetry and character. He professed—to a degree rare amongst the medieval poets, and not fully developed till our own time—a passionate love of nature, a keen observation of all her changing moods, and a thorough enjoyment of rural and romantic scenery. You may trace in his verses the

flicker of the sunbeams through the boughs which skirt his favourite stream—the broad outline of the mountains which guard the horizon—the voices of the wind —the passage of light and shade, of night and day, the silent monitress of passing time—the stern lesson of the seasons, which pluck and wither the leaves and flowers, and abandon man to the wintry solitude of his thoughts. The uneasiness of his life, which hung heavily upon him in cities and courts, was dissipated when he regained the liberty of the country; for it was there he found his truest inspiration. These rural intervals are the sunbeams of his life, otherwise too prone to self-examination or regret. Even his occasional interviews with Laura have an air of stolen pleasure, scarcely amounting to enjoyment, and leave behind them a trace of melancholy. The following sonnet is supposed to have been written when he was on the eve of leaving Avignon for one of his journeys, and he imagines that her looks reproach him for his intended absence:—

"A tender paleness stealing o'er her cheek
Veiled her sweet smile as 'twere a passing cloud,
And such pure dignity of love avowed,
That in my eyes my full soul strove to speak;
Then knew I how the spirits of the blest
Communion hold in heaven; so beamed serene
That pitying thought, by every eye unseen
Save mine, wont ever on her charms to rest.
Each grace angelic, each meek glance humane,
That Love e'er to his fairest votaries lent,
By this were deemed ungentle cold disdain!
Her lovely looks, with sadness downward bent,
In silence to my fancy seemed to say,
Who calls my faithful friend so far away?"

The next sonnet has in it a tone which Shakespeare might have caught, and indeed did catch, in those most plaintive and mysterious utterances of his verse, which also bear marks of an Italian tradition :—

"If faith most true, a heart that cannot feign,
If love's sweet languishment and chastened thought,
And wishes pure by nobler feelings taught,
If in a labyrinth wanderings long and vain,
If on the brow each pang portrayed to bear,
Or from the heart low broken sounds to draw,
Withheld by shame, or checked by pious awe,
If on the faded cheek love's hue to wear,
If then myself to hold one far more dear,
If sighs that cease not, tears that ever flow,
Wrung from the heart by all love's various woe,
In absence if consumed, and chilled when near,—
If these be ills in which I waste my prime,
Though I the sufferer be, yours, lady, is the crime."

—Lady Dacre.

And we may here introduce an elegant translation of a sonnet of a more devotional character, for which we are indebted to a member of the gifted family of Mr Roscoe, the historian of Lorenzo de Medici :—

"Mourning the waste of my departed days
I wander ; days, when vain and worldly things
Drew my soul down to earth, though blest with wings
To reach perchance no vulgar height of praise.
Thou that hast marked my low and worthless ways
Invisible, immortal King of kings !
Succour my soul in these her wanderings,
And on her darkness turn Thy gracious rays,
So shall this life of war and tempest close,
Havened in peace ; my sojourn has been vain,
But my departure shall be strong in bliss,

If o'er what little space may yet remain
Thy hand the shelter of its mercy throws—
Thou knowest I have no other hope but this."

Although Petrarch carried the composition of the Sonnet to great perfection, and every one of these small poems is a masterpiece of rhythm and appropriate language, he appears to me to show himself a far greater poet in his canzonets, where the melody of his verse has a freer course, and the current of sentiment is at once more varied and more sustained. The two following poems are the most admired specimens of the love-lorn bard of Vaucluse. They transport the reader to the scene and the hours of his meditations; and if the sentiment be overstrained, the language is at least in perfect harmony with it.

CANZONET.

"In the still evening, when with rapid flight
Low in the western sky the sun descends
To give expectant nations life and light;
The aged pilgrim, in some clime unknown
Slow journeying, right onward fearful bends
With weary haste, a stranger and alone;
Yet when his labour ends
He solitary sleeps,
And in short slumber steeps
Each sense of sorrow hanging on the day
And all the toil of the long-passed way:
But oh! each pang, that wakes with morn's first ray,
More piercing wounds my breast
When Heaven's eternal light sinks crimson in the West.

His burning wheels when downward Phœbus bends
And leaves the world to night, its lengthened shade
Each towering mountain o'er the vale extends;
The thrifty peasant shoulders light his spade,

With sylvan carol gay and uncouth note
Bidding his cares upon the wild winds float,
Content in peace to share
His poor and humble fare,
As in that golden age
We honour still, yet leave its simple ways;
Whoe'er so list, let joy his hours engage:
No gladness e'er has cheered my gloomy days
Nor moment of repose,
However rolled the spheres, whatever planet rose.

When as the shepherd marks the sloping ray
Of the great orb that sinks in ocean's bed,
While in the East soft steals the evening grey,
He rises and resumes the accustomed crook,
Quitting the beechen grove, the field, the brook,
And gently homeward drives the flock he fed;
Then far from human tread,
In lonely hut or cave,
O'er which the green boughs wave,
In sleep without a thought he lays his head:
Ah! cruel Love! at this dark silent hour
Thou wak'st to trace, and with redoubled power,
The voice, the step, the air
Of her, who scorns thy chains, and flies thy fatal snare.

And in some sheltered bay, at evening's close
The mariners their rude coats round them fold,
Stretched on the rugged plank in deep repose:
But I, though Phœbus sink into the main,
And leave Granada wrapt in night with Spain,
Morocco and the pillars famed of old,
Though all of human kind,
And every creature blest,
All hush their ills to rest,
No end to my unceasing sorrows find;
And still the sad account swells day by day;

For since these thoughts on my torn spirit prey,
I see the tenth year roll;
Nor hope of freedom springs in my desponding soul.

Thus, as I vent my bursting bosom's pain,
Lo! from their yoke I see the oxen freed,
Slow moving homeward o'er the furrowed plain:
Why to my sorrow is no pause decreed?
Why from my yoke no respite must I know?
Why gush these tears and never to cease to flow?
Ah me! what sought my eyes,
When fixed in fond surprise,
On her angelic face
I gazed, and on my heart each charm imprest,
From whence, nor force nor art the sacred trace
Shall e'er remove, till I the victim rest
Of Death, whose mortal blow
Shall my pure spirit free, and this worn frame lay low?"

—LADY DACRE.

The second of these passionate strains is even more melancholy than the preceding one. He anticipates his own death, and hopes that at last Laura may cast a look of kindness and regret upon his tomb. How different was their fate! Laura died in the prime of life, and the despondiñg lover survived her long enough to write another volume of verses to her memory.

CANZONET.

"Ye waters clear and fresh, to whose bright wave
She all her beauties gave,—
Sole of her sex in my impassioned mind!
Thou sacred branch so graced
(With sighs e'en now retraced!)
On whose smooth shaft her heavenly form reclined!
Herbage and flowers that bent the robe beneath,

Whose graceful folds comprest
Her pure angelic breast!
Ye airs serene that breathe
Where love first taught me in her eyes his lore!
Yet once more all attest
The last sad plaintive lay my woe-worn heart may pour!

If so I must my destiny fulfil,
And love to close these weeping eyes be doomed
By Heaven's mysterious will,
Oh grant that in this loved retreat, entombed,
My poor remains may lie,
And my freed soul regain its native sky!
Less rude shall Death appear,
If yet a hope so dear
Smooth the dread passage to eternity!
No shade so calm—serene,
My weary spirit finds on earth below;
No grave so still—so green
In which my o'ertoiled frame may rest from mortal woe!

Yet one day, haply, she—so heavenly fair!
So kind in cruelty!—
With careless steps may to these haunts repair,
And where her beaming eye
Met mine in days so blest,
A wistful glance may yet unconscious rest,
And seeking me around,
May mark among the stones a lowly mound,
That speaks of pity to the shuddering sense!
Then may she breathe a sigh
Of power to rain me mercy from above!
Doing Heaven violence,
All beautiful in tears of late relenting love!

Still dear to memory! when in odorous showers,
Scattering their balmy flowers
To summer airs th' o'ershadowing branches bowed,

The while, with humble state
In all the pomp of tribute sweets she sate,
Wrapt in the roseate cloud!
Now clustering blossoms deck her vesture's hem,
Now her bright tresses gem,
(In that all-blissful day,
Like burnish'd gold with orient pearls inwrought,)
Some strew the turf—some on the waters float!
Some, fluttering, seem to say
In wanton circlets tost, 'Here Love holds sovereign sway!'"

—LADY DACRE.

There is nowhere any trace of gaiety or gladness in Petrarch's poetry. His love for Laura is a perpetual complaint. Whether he invokes her charms or deplores her coldness—whether he records a passing glance of his mistress, or laments her absence—he seems doomed to continual misery. No tinge of humour breaks the wearisome solemnity, or the eternal monotony, of his unrequited vows. The figure of Laura herself is, after all, not so much a charming woman, as a stern monitress pointing to the grave. Such a passion, expressed in such terms, might be conceived in the cell of an anchorite. And if Petrarch in daily life had not been a much livelier companion than he is in his sonnets, he would scarcely have obtained the universal popularity he enjoyed.

In the singular dialogue or colloquy between St Augustine and himself, which Petrarch entitled his "Secret," or remarks on the contempt of the world—a dialogue having very little resemblance to those of Cicero or of Plato, though professedly written in imitation of them—the author affects to lay bare the defects of his character and the workings of his heart. "Love and glory," says the Saint, "are the chains which bind you

to earth;" and the charge is not denied. "Love," rejoins the impenitent poet, "has made me all I am; and I confess that there is nothing I would not sacrifice for immortal fame." "Nay,' says Augustine, "cast aside your historical manuscripts—leave Africa to herself; as for the fame of Scipio, you cannot augment it; turn all your thoughts to the vicissitudes of time and the end of life. As often as you see the corn of summer succeed the flowers of spring; or the coolness of autumn temper the heat of summer; or the snows of winter sweep over the vine-wreaths of autumn,—say to thyself, they pass, but soon to return: it is I who depart for ever."

This vein of reflection runs through all the writings of Petrarch; but when he speaks of the passion of love, it is always to describe himself as its victim and its slave—too much engrossed by sentiments and desires that tore him from nobler employents—as a man would speak of opium-eating, or any other resistless appetite that occupies and depraves the mind. It never seems to have occurred to St Augustine or to himself that this species of ideal passion was obnoxious to a severer sentence, if tried by an independent standard of right and wrong. On the contrary, it was transfused with pious sentiments, and it aspired to a celestial union. The death of Laura, like the death of Beatrice, was to be the natural consummation—the apotheosis of his passion; and there is nothing in his writings finer than the poem entitled "The Triumph of Death," in which he describes a vision of his departed mistress. At that stage of his life, he seems to have flattered himself that she had shown him a preference, which in truth had never existed in her lifetime. The following translation of this work is by

Ugo Foscolo, and in prose; but it may be preferred to the attempts which have been made to fuse it into English verse. The original is in terza-rima, the metre of Dante.

"Laura descends from heaven on the dew, the night after she had left for ever the miseries of the world. She appears before her lover, stretches forth her hand, and sighing, says to him: 'Recognise the woman who, from the first moment that thy young heart knew her, withdrew thee from the path of the crowd.' Whilst my tears testified the sorrow which her loss had occasioned me, 'Thou wilt never be happy,' she said, 'while thou art the slave of the world. To a pure mind, death is emancipation from a dreary prison. My loss would give thee pleasure if thou knewest but the thousandth part of my happiness.' In uttering these words, she turned her eyes with religious gratitude towards heaven.

"She ceased; and I said to her, 'Do not the weight of infirmities, and the tortures invented by tyrants, sometimes embitter the agonies of death?' 'I cannot deny,' said she, 'that death is preceded by acute suffering and by the dread of eternity; but if we place our trust in God, it is but as a sigh. In the flower of my youth, when thou lovedst me the most, life had its greatest charm for me; but when I quitted it, I felt the gaiety of one who leaves the place of his exile to return to his home. I felt no sorrow except pity for thee.'

"'Ah! but tell me,' said I, 'in the name of that fidelity which you formerly knew, and which you now know more certainly in the presence of that Being from whom nothing is hidden—tell me, was the pity which you felt for me inspired by love?'

"I had hardly uttered these words, when I perceived her countenance illumined by that heavenly smile which had ever shed serenity over my sorrows, and she sighed. 'Thou hast always possessed my affection,' said she, 'and thou always wilt possess it,

'Mai diviso
Da te non fu il mio cor, nè giammai fia:

but I have deemed it right to temper thy passion, by the sternness of my looks. A mother never loves her child more dearly than when she seems to chide it. How often have I said to myself, he is consumed by a raging fire, and I must not therefore let him know what is passing in my heart! Alas! we are little capable of such efforts when we ourselves love and yet fear. But it was by these means only that we could preserve our honour and save our souls. How often have I feigned anger while love was struggling in my heart! When I saw thee sinking beneath despondency, I gave thee a look of consolation—I spoke to thee. The grief and the dread which I felt must have altered the tone of my voice, and thou must have perceived it. At other times thou wert carried away by rage, and I could control thee by severity only. These are the expedients, these are the arts I have practised. It was by this alternation of kindness and of rigour that I have conducted thee sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy, wearied in truth, but still I have conducted thee till there is no more any danger: I have saved us both, and my happiness is the greater that I have done so.'

"My tears flowed fast while she spoke, and I answered her, trembling, that I should be rewarded if I might dare to believe her. She interrupted me, and her face reddened as she said, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? My tongue shall NEVER REVEAL whether thou hast been as dear to my eyes as to my heart—

> 'Se al mondo tu piacesti agli occhi miei,
> Questo mi taccio.

But in nothing have I delighted more than in thy love, and in the immortality which thou hast given to my name. All that I required of thee was to moderate thy excess. In endeavouring to tell me the secret of thy soul, thou openedst it to all the world. Thence arose my coldness. The more thou calledst aloud for pity, the more was I constrained by modesty and fear to be silent. There has been little difference in our sympathy, except that the one proclaimed, and the

other concealed it. But complaint does not embitter sufferings, nor does silence soften them.'

"Her lover then asked her if it would be long before he should rejoin her. Laura departed, saying: 'As far as it is permitted me to know, thou wilt remain long upon earth without me.'"

Petrarch survived Laura twenty-six years.

In all Petrarch's philosophical writings, as well as in his poems, he gives way to that spirit of introspection and analysis, which was the strongest feature in his character, and which had been matured by his habits of seclusion and study. His own feelings, his own thoughts, the relation in which he stood to the great minds of antiquity whom he worshipped, to the truths of religion, and to the life to come, are his unceasing theme. Thus, in his dialogues on "His Own Ignorance and that of Others," on the "Remedies of Either Fortune," and on "Solitary Life," he analyses more than he speculates; he contrasts the vanities and ignorances of life, in the spirit of the great Preacher of old, with its ephemeral pleasures and successes; and he moralises on the unsatisfied longings of his own intellect and heart. Joy and Hope are waging a perpetual warfare with Grief and Fear. In the dialogue on "True Knowledge," it is the *Idiota* rather than the vainglorious *Orator* who has truth on his side, for it is the truth of humility and common sense. The books on "Solitary Life" are said to have been the most popular of his prose writings. But Petrarch's conception of solitary life was that of the student rather than of the saint. He sought the retreat of Vaucluse, surrounded by natural beauties and moral pleasures, rather than the cell of the monk or the

ascetic life in which his brother Gherardo took refuge; and he applied himself to work out his own spiritual life and progress, not only in solitude, but in the world. His own existence was a dialogue between the contemplative and active faculties of man—between a lofty sense of moral duty and the frailty of his desires and habits—between a noble sense of intellectual power, and the childish irritability of disappointed vanity, singularly impatient of criticism or censure. Thus his life and writings present a lively image of a double nature, so opposed and inconsistent, that the conflict of these two beings in one man may best explain the melancholy and discontent which seemed inseparable from his pleasures and his triumphs. On the one hand, a sensitive and solitary disposition—a man beaten by the storms of an objectless passion, weary of the world, irritated by the evil of his times and the anarchy of his country, seeking a refuge in rural life, in absolute retirement, and in the ardent pursuit of letters and philosophy; on the other, an eager curiosity, an incessant love of change, indefatigable travelling, a thirst for fame, a love of society (for he says that even at Vaucluse he seldom dined alone, though he declares himself unskilled in conversation), a heart as enthusiastic in friendship as it was in love, and an ambition to take part in, and direct, the great political movements of his age. Qualities so dissimilar it is hard to reconcile. Yet both these natures existed in Petrarch, and both were gratified.

An ideal passion, an ideal philosophy, an ideal standard of political liberty and virtue were the characteristics of Petrarch's enthusiastic nature; he carried the same romantic sentiments into his friendships with the

great and good; and they embellished with a sort of radiance the daily intercourse and common incidents of his life. Thus he speaks in the same terms of the peasant and his wife who waited on him at Vaucluse, as he uses when recording the good qualities of his powerful friends:—

"He was my counsellor, and the keeper of all my most secret designs; and I should have lamented his loss still more grievously had I not been warned by his advanced age that I could not expect long to retain possession of such a companion. In him I have lost a confidential servant, or rather, a father, in whose bosom I had deposited my sorrows for these fifteen years past; and his humble cottage was, to me, as a temple. He cultivated for me a few acres of indifferent land. He knew not how to read, yet he was also the guardian of my library. With anxious eye he watched over my most rare and ancient copies, which, by long use, he could distinguish from those that were more modern, or of which I myself was the author. Whenever I consigned a volume to his custody, he was transported with joy; he pressed it to his bosom with sighs; with great reverence he repeated the author's name; and seemed as if he had received an accession of learning and happiness from the sight and touch of a book. His wife's face was scorched by the sun, and her body extenuated by labour; but she had a soul of the most candid and generous nature. Under the burning heat of the dog-star, in the midst of snow and of rain, she was found from morning till evening in the fields, whilst even a greater part of the night was given to work than to repose. Her bed was of straw—her food was black bread, frequently full of sand—and her drink was water, mixed with vinegar; yet she never appeared weary or afflicted—never showed any desire of a more easy life—nor was ever heard to complain of the cruelty of destiny and of mankind."

CHAPTER VI.

PETRARCH ON HIS TRAVELS.

It would be a vain and superfluous labour to detain the readers of this little volume with an analysis of the theory of Petrarch's love for Laura, or to follow the Italian commentators who have written for centuries on the graces of his style or the mysterious language of his allusions. My desire is rather to present Petrarch to them as a man of the world, collecting with indefatigable industry all the learning of his age, corresponding with the most eminent and accomplished men of his time, and sharing in the great patriotic movements of Italy and of Europe. He continued, indeed, to repair at intervals to the rustic solitude of Vaucluse, and always affected to regard the months or years he spent there as the best portions of his life; but his letters and literary labours show that these intervals were employed in preparing for fresh efforts in the field of active life. I shall therefore follow in chronological order the incidents of his varied career.

Whatever may have been the attractions of Avignon and of Laura, they did not prevent him from gratifying his desire to travel as early, it is said, as the year 1329,

when he first visited Switzerland and Belgium; but the only record which exists of this journey is to be found in a letter written from Arquà within a few months of the close of his life. It is a letter of early recollections. He relates the scene in which his father, to stimulate him to the study of laws, threw his adored Virgil and Cicero into the fire, from which they were with difficulty rescued; and he then goes on to say:—

"It was about the twenty-fifth year of my life that, travelling through Belgium and Switzerland, I arrived at Liège, a city in which I heard there was a good collection of books. Having asked my companions to wait for me, I found two orations of Cicero, one of which I transcribed myself—the other was copied by a friend; thus both of them were secured by me for Italy. You would laugh to hear that in this considerable city, frequented by strangers, we cudgelled our brains to procure a little ink; and when we got it, it was as yellow as saffron. I had lost all hope of finding the book 'De Republicâ;' and I searched in vain for the book 'De Consolatione.' Under the false title of a work of St Augustine, I read for some time, without finding out the truth, what was really the divine eloquence of Cicero; and I afterwards discovered by comparison that what I had read was nearly the whole of the second and third books of the 'Academics.'

"By great good fortune I had made the acquaintance, some forty years ago, of a most learned jurisconsult, Raimondo Soranzio, the possessor of a capital library but the work he cared for besides his law-books was Livy. In this he took great delight; though, not being accustomed to read histories, he found it difficult to understand. I did what I could to assist him, on which he took me to his heart like a son, and not only lent me, but gave me some of his books. From him I had Varro, and a volume of Cicero containing, amongst other well-known works, the

books 'De Oratore' and 'De Legibus (important as they always are), and, above all, the two most rare books 'De Gloriâ.' I thought myself the possessor of a treasure indeed."—Epist. Senil., xvi. 1.

And so it was, a treasure for all time; but the sequel of the story destroys our hopes. Long afterwards Petrarch was moved by compassion for his old schoolmaster Convennole to lend him these precious volumes. The schoolmaster, in great distress, pawned them for bread; before Petrarch could recover them, the old man died, and the book 'De Gloriâ' was never heard of more. The details are given at length in a letter written from Arquà to Luca della Pemna, the Pope's Secretary, probably in the last year of Petrarch's life.

The evidence of this journey in 1329 is somewhat vague, as it rests entirely upon an old man's reminiscence of an incident that occurred in his youth. It is more probable that his first visit to Flanders took place in 1333; and that he began his travels by another journey which had a marked influence on his life.

In the spring of 1330, upon the express invitation of Giacomo Colonna, then recently appointed by the Pope to the small see of Lombes in the Pyrenees, Petrarch accompanied his friend and patron when he went to take possession of this diocese. They passed through Narbonne and Toulouse, where they found some traces of the greatness of Rome and the literary festivals of the Troubadours, which, indeed, still survive under the name of "Floral games," in two of the southern cities of France. Lombes itself was a desolate and secluded retreat, but it was enlivened to Petrarch by the enjoyment of the liveliest friendship; for, in addition to

his host, it was here he formed a lasting attachment to his Lælius and his Socrates, as he was wont to call them —friends to whom much of his correspondence was addressed—with whom he was ever ready to share all he possessed—and whose intimacy with him continued till it was terminated by death. Lælius was a young Roman of the family of Stephano, a stanch partisan of the Colonnas, in whom Petrarch discovered something of the genius of ancient Rome. The youth to whom he gave the name of Socrates was in fact a Dutchman, from Bois le Duc —his real name was Louis de Campigny or Kempen. This charming barbarian, as they styled him, was an excellent musician, an accomplished scholar, and a most faithful friend. On one occasion only this triple band of friendship seems to have been interrupted by a quarrel between Lælius and Socrates, arising out of mutual jealousy of Petrarch's regard. It was many years after their first meeting; and the poet instantly addressed to them a letter on the sacred duties of friendship, in the most passionate and eloquent language. He enjoined upon them to *read it together*. They did so; and the breach was healed for ever.

Upon the return of Petrarch from Lombes to Avignon, he was formally installed in the dwelling or little court of Cardinal Colonna, and became a member of his household. So great was his consideration there, that on one occasion when evidence was taken on oath as to the cause of some disturbance, and even the prelates of the family had to submit to this test, Petrarch was absolved from it, the Cardinal saying, "The word of Petrarch is enough."

This anecdote might suffice to show the deference

which already attached itself to the name of Petrarch, though he was not at the time more than twenty-six or twenty-seven. From his establishment as a member of the Cardinal's household dates his entry into the great world and his interest in public affairs, and we find him henceforth living on terms of intimacy with the most eminent persons of the time. Amongst these, one deserves special notice here.

In 1331, and again in 1333, Richard of Bury, afterwards Chancellor of England, and Bishop of Durham, was sent by King Edward III. as his ambassador to the Papal Court. In the majestic chapel of the Nine Altars, which closes with a fabric of inimitable beauty the shrine of St Cuthbert in our northern Durham, the traveller may still view the spot which received the mortal remains of this remarkable man; and it may give additional interest to his memory to recollect that he was the friend of Petrarch. He was in fact the first scholar in Britain, if not in Europe. England had sent forth no one to compare with him since the Venerable Bede, whose remains also rest near his own. He combined strong literary tastes with great influence in the Church and in the State. He was a large collector of manuscripts, and the author of the first work that bore the name of 'Philobiblion.' These common pursuits recommended Petrarch to his notice, and to him Petrarch applied to solve the question, "Where is the *Ultima Thule* of the Latin poets?" The bishop seems to have eluded the question, and promised to send a solution of it when he got back to his books. But the answer never came. Petrarch fell back on a volume of Giraldus Cambrensis, which he possessed, but that left him in

doubt, and whilst he was travelling on the shores of Holland, he recalled to memory all that Virgil, Orosius, Pomponius Mela, Pliny the younger, and Claudian had said on the subject. All this is rather pedantic, but it shows the extent of reading and the retentiveness of his memory.

The letter on Thule, the fruit of these inquiries, is said to have been written in 1337 "from the shores of the North Sea;" but in the spring of that year he was in Rome, and in August he had returned to Avignon. The only authentic journey to the north of which we have a detailed account must be placed in the year 1333. He first arrived in Paris, where he doubtless visited the University, which some years later tendered him its highest honour; and then proceeded to Belgium and Cologne, returning to Avignon by Lyons.

The following letter on his journey is one of the most descriptive he has left:—

"FRAN. PETRARCHA *to* JOHN COLONNA, *Cardinal.*.

"I left Aix-la-Chapelle after having availed myself of the baths or *douches* from which it derives its name, and I arrived at Cologne (Agrippina Colonia), a place situated on the left bank of the Rhine, which is no less celebrated for its position and its river than for its inhabitants. I was astonished to find in this barbarous land so much courtesy, so much splendour in the city, so much gravity in the men, and such remarkable grace among the ladies. The eve of St John the Baptist happened to fall during my stay there; and, just as the sun was setting, I was led by my friends (for even here my reputation had gained me more friends than I deserved) from my lodging to the river, there to behold a very curious sight. My expectations were not deceived: the whole bank was covered with an immense number of women, all of surpassing

beauty, both in figure, in features, and in dress, so that any one whose heart was not already preoccupied could not fail to have fallen in love there. I stood upon a slight elevation, whence I could see all that passed. The crowd was very great, but no offence was given to any one, and all seemed to be in high glee: some were engarlanded with odoriferous herbs, and, with their sleeves tucked up above the elbow, they washed their white hands and arms in the stream, murmuring I know not what in the gentle tones of their foreign tongue. I never understood so well that old proverb, quoted by Cicero, which says that, 'Amongst unknown languages, every one is deaf and dumb.' I did not, however, want for interpreters of the greatest merit; and nothing would have astonished you more than to find what Pierian spirits are nurtured under this sky. If Juvenal wondered that

'Gallia causidicos docuit facunda Britannos,'

he might indeed marvel at the eloquence and learning of these German poets. Unless I am deceiving you, I would have you know that they have indeed no Virgil, but more than one Ovid, as that poet himself said, at the end of his 'Metamorphoses,' trusting either to the favour of posterity or to his own great wit. For he is even popular wherever the power (or rather the name) of Rome is known over the world. You will readily imagine that with these companions I made the best use of my tongue and of my ears when anything was to be said or heard. Now, as I was ignorant of the ceremony which I was then witnessing, I asked one of their number, in the words of Virgil—

'Quid vult concursus ad amnem?
Quidve petunt animæ?'

I was then informed that this was an old custom of the place, and that the common people, and especially the women, were persuaded that any impending calamity of the next year was washed away by that day's ablution in the river, and that happy seasons were sure to follow; so that this cere-

mony is performed every year with unabated zeal. At this I smiled, saying, 'O happy inhabitants of the banks of the Rhine, whose misfortunes are all swept away by your river, whilst neither Po nor Tiber can rid us of ours! You throw your ills on the bosom of the Rhine, who bears them away to Britain; we might send ours to the Afric or Illyrian coast, but (as I am given to understand) our rivers are far too lazy in their course.'

"A few days afterwards I was taken round the little state by the same friendly guides—an excursion which was the more agreeable to me, as I met not only with the objects before my eyes, but with the perpetual reminiscences of the valour and the illustrious monuments of Rome. I thought of that Marcus Agrippa, the founder of this colony, who, though he built so many places both at home and abroad, conferred his name on this spot, as the most worthy to bear it; and whom Augustus would have chosen out of the whole world to be the husband of his daughter, but especially of his dear and only Augusta.[1]

"I afterwards saw the bodies of so many thousand holy virgins, and the earth, which, as it is consecrated by such sacred relics, is said to reject all degenerate corpses. I saw a Capitol the very image of our own, save that instead of a Senate deliberating there on matters of peace and war, beauteous youths and girls are here employed in singing nocturnal psalms to God in eternal harmony. There nothing is heard but the noise of wheels, the clang of arms, and the groans of captives—here is peace and joy and the voices of such as are glad; there is the triumph of the warrior—here of the peacemaker. I also saw a temple of singular beauty, built in the midst of the city, which, although it be as yet unfinished, is

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1 Petrarch here makes a strange mistake in his enthusiasm for Agrippa. The daughter of Augustus, to whom that general was married, was the widow of Marcellus, and is well known as the beautiful, the infamous, Julia. The Colonia Agrippina took its name, not from Agrippa, but from Agrippina, the daughter of Germanicus, who was born here.

not unreasonably styled the chiefest in the world. I had here an opportunity of seeing the bodies of the Magian kings, who came from the East to the West to adore the King of Heaven in Bethlehem, and I surveyed their relics with a respectful piety. You will think, O most worthy father, that I am somewhat over-diffuse in these details which I have collected; but to my mind letter-writing is less intended to confer distinction on the penman, than to give instruction to the reader. I left Cologne on the 2d of July, and I suffered so much from the sun and dust, that I could not help wishing for a little of that Rhenal snow and frost which Virgil tells of. I crossed the forest of Ardennes, which I had read of, but which, bleak and dreadful as it is, I ventured through alone, and that in time of war; but, as they say, there is a Providence for the hardy. At length, after a long journey, I reached Lyons, which is also a Roman colony, and somewhat more ancient than that of Agrippina. The Rhone will now serve me for the rest of my journey; but I have writ this much that you may know where I am, and still cherish me in your remembrance."—Epist. Fam., i. 4.

In the spring of 1337 Petrarch first visited Rome. He embarked at Marseilles, touched on the Tuscan coast, and landed at Civita Vecchia, whence he made his way to Capranica, in the Sabine hills, the castle of Count Anguillara, who had married a daughter of the house of Colonna—for the country was in arms, and Rome itself could scarcely be approached.

"The armed shepherd," he says, "is watching his flock, not so much afraid of wolves as of men. The bucklered ploughman strikes his ox with an inverted javelin. The fowler hides his nets behind his shield—nay, those who draw water from the well seek it in a rusty helmet by a wretched rope. All is in arms." Here he again met his friends Giacomo and Stephen Col-

onna, and with their escort he reached the city. Thence he wrote the following lines to the Cardinal:—

"What shall he expect of Rome who has been so moved by the Sabine hills? You may have supposed I should write something great on reaching Rome. Perhaps I may have the matter of some future writing, but at present I dare say nothing, crushed by the miracle of its greatness and the weight of my amazement. You were wont, I remember, to dissuade me from coming here; lest my enthusiasm should be quenched by the aspect of this ruined city, answering neither to its fame nor to the conception I had formed of it from books. I, too, was not unwilling to defer my journey, though burning with desire, from the fear that sight would lower the impression of the mind, and the presence of these objects mar the greatness of their fame. But, on the contrary, it has diminished nothing—it has magnified it all. Truly Rome was greater, and its remains are greater than I had thought them. I now wonder, not that the world was conquered by this city, but that it was conquered so late."—(Rome. The Ides of March. From the Capitol.)

From that moment the glory and greatness of Rome kindled in the heart of Petrarch an undying enthusiasm. He saw her indeed reduced to the lowest extremity of anarchy and destitution by the dissensions of her nobles, by the abandonment of the Papal Court, and by the misery of the people. To raise her once more from this lamentable condition by the return of the Popes, by the protection of the Emperor, by the ascendancy of the Colonnas, and even, as we shall see, by a great popular movement, was the mainspring of Petrarch's political action through life. No matter by what means the end was attained: for he saw in the restored ascendancy of Rome the future union and independence of Italy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE POEM OF "AFRICA" AND LATIN PROSE WORKS.

ALTHOUGH interrupted by not infrequent journeys, this was the period of Petrarch's life at which he resided most continuously at Vaucluse, and in which he conceived or executed his most important literary works. He first undertook a full and complete history of Rome itself from the age of Romulus to the reign of Vespasian —a work of immense time and labour, of which no traces remain. Of all the heroes of ancient Rome, Scipio was in his eyes the greatest; and when he desisted from his historical labours, it was because Scipio fired his imagination as the type of epic heroism. Hence the great Latin poem of "Africa," to which he now devoted all his powers. The poem of Silius Italicus, on the same subject, was then unknown, and Petrarch conceived himself to be engaged on an original work. Ten years afterwards it was still incomplete; fifteen years afterwards he still spoke of it as "unripe fruit;" and in his lifetime it was not published at all. It therefore contributed nothing to his reputation while alive, and it has rather detracted from his fame in after-ages.

Walter Savage Landor, who was no mean judge of

Latin poetry, whether classical or medieval, affirmed that no living man had ever had the patience to master above 500 lines of Petrarch's 'Africa,' and that he himself stopped at that limit. I am content with the experience and confession of so great an authority; and it would add nothing to the interest of this volume to attempt a sketch of so unattractive a work. The versification is harsh and often incorrect: and wherever it rises into elegance it may be accused of plagiarism. Singularly enough, Petrarch's sense of rhythm and melody, which is so exquisitely refined in his sonnets and canzonets, deserts him under the influence of the Latin muse, which proved to him so stern and sterile a mistress. There is, however, one passage in the 6th Book which has been rescued from oblivion by the hand of a still greater poet; and the reader will not regret to read the death of Mago, the Carthaginian hero of Petrarch's poem, in the language of Lord Byron.

THE DEATH OF MAGO.

"The Carthaginian rose—and when he found
The increasing anguish of his mortal wound
All hope forbid—with difficult, slow breath
He thus addressed the coming hour of death:—
'Farewell to all my longings after fame!
Cursed love of power, are such thine end and aim,
Oh, blind to all that might have made thy bliss,
And must ambition's frenzy come to this?
From height to height aspiring still to rise,
Man stands rejoicing on the precipice,
Nor sees the innumerable storms that wait
To level all the projects of the great.
Oh, trembling pinnacle of power on earth!
Deceitful hopes! and glory blazoned forth

With false, fictitious blandishments! Oh, life
Of doubt and danger, and perpetual strife
With death! And *thou!* worse than this night of woe
That comest to all, but ah! when none can know,
Hour singled from all years! why must man bear
A lot so sad? The tribes of earth and air
No thoughts of future ill in life molest,
And when they die, sleep on, and take their rest;
But man in restless dreams spends all his years,
And shortens life with death's encroaching fears.
Oh thou, whose cold hand tears the veil from error,
Whose hollow eye is our delusion's mirror!
Death, life's chief blessing! At this hour of fate,
Wretch that I am! I see my faults too late.
Perils ill-sought, and crimes ill worth the price,
Pass on in dire review before my eyes;
Yet, thing of dust, and on the verge of night,
Man dares to climb the stars, and on the height
Of heaven his owlet vision dares to bend
From that low earth, where all his hopes descend.
What then avails me in this trying hour,
Or thee, my Italy, this arm of power?
Why did I bid the torch of ravage flame?
Ah! why as with a trumpet's tongue proclaim
The rights of man? confounding wrong and right,
And plunging nations in a deeper night?
Why did I raise of marble to the skies
A gorgeous palace? Vain and empty prize!
When with it lost my air-built dreams must lie
Gulphed in the ocean of eternity.
My dearest brother, ah! remember me,
And let my fate avert the like from thee.'
He said, and now, its mortal bondage riven,
His spirit'fled, and from its higher heaven
Of space looked down where Rome and Carthage lay,
Thrice blest in having died before the day
Whose wing of havoc swept his race away,

And had not saved by valour vainly shown
His country's woes, his brother's, and his own."
—Lord Byron.

The writings of Petrarch in Latin prose, which form by far the largest portion of his literary labours, deserve, I think, to be spoken of more favourably than they have been by some modern and recent writers. No doubt they want the polish of the Italian humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Leonardo Aretino, Poggio, Politian, Sannazaro: but they do not deserve the reproach of harshness or barbarism. Erasmus said of him that "he wants the full acquaintance with the language, and his whole diction shows the rudeness of the age;" but Mr Hallam replies with more liberality and truth, that "relatively to his predecessors of the medieval period, he was successful in what he had most at heart, the acquisition of a Latin style;" and passages full of eloquence and feeling are not wanting. The first acquaintance of Petrarch with the Latin tongue must have been made through the Vulgate, the Digest, and some of the Fathers of the Church. Virgil and Cicero broke upon him like a new light—a treasure too precious to be handled. Yet before middle age he had acquired a knowledge not only of their writings, but of every other known writer of antiquity of whom any manuscript at all had been discovered, which is almost incredible. "I detested," he says in one of his letters, "the frivolities and sheer nonsense of the moderns; and I may venture modestly and privately to boast in writing to you, that I was the first, at least in Italy, who seem to have restored that style of our forefathers, which had become

here so effeminate and enervated, and to have brought it back to vitality and strength." To Cicero his first homage was paid. The following letter to a citizen of Florence describes his zealous interest in the Ciceronian writings :—

"I have kept your Cicero four years and more. The cause of this great delay is the rarity and dearth of copyists who understand such things. So incredible is the prostration of studies in this age of ours, that things in themselves obscure become unintelligible, and things fallen into recent neglect have altogether perished; so that the richest and sweetest fruits of letters and of intellect are gradually fading away. As, therefore, I could not live without your Cicero, and could get no one to copy the book, I turned from outward to inward resources, and set my own tired fingers and used-up pen upon the work. I did not read a line till I had written it. It was enough for me to know that this was a work of Tully and a rare one. But as I advanced I was so enchanted with certain passages, and so powerfully excited, that the copying and the reading became one, and my only dread was lest the eye should outrun the pen, and thus deaden the ardour of my writing. Thus, then, the pen controlling the eye, and the eye urging on the pen, I was borne onwards, not only delighted with the work, but learning and committing to memory much as I went along. For by so much as writing is slower than reading, by so much does what is written strike a deeper root."

But though the style of Cicero was, no doubt, his model, he attained rather to the epistolary than to the philosophical diction of that great master. It is in the letters of Petrarch, rather than in his dialogues and treatises, that we find him at his best: the latter are stiff and quaint, with a strong tinge of what may be termed

clerical language; the former breathe all the life, the friendship, the playfulness, and the vanity of the man.

It is to Petrarch himself that the world owes the discovery of the only authentic manuscript of Cicero's, "Epistolæ ad Diversos." It still exists in the Medicean Library at Florence. Politian says of this manuscript that it is the fountain-head from which all the other copies are derived. Ernesti calls it the earliest and the best. It was found in a church at Verona, perhaps in the chapter-library, in 1345. These were the letters so eagerly sought for, and so fondly perused and even copied by Petrarch's own hand, which he speaks of in a letter addressed to Cicero himself in the other world; for in his epistolary ardour, Cicero and Seneca, Varro and Quintilian,[1] Livy, Asinius Pollio, Horace, and Virgil, and even Homer, were reckoned among his correspondents and his friends. He knew them, he says, as if he had lived with them. Yet, one at least of the works of Cicero known to him, has since been lost; and he speaks of others, such as the "De Oratore," the "Academics" and the "Laws," as so mutilated and corrupt, that it were almost better they had perished. With the "De Officiis," the "Tusculan Questions," and the "De Finibus," he was especially familiar. As his knowledge of the Ciceronian epistles was not attained till Petrarch had passed his fortieth year, it may be concluded that his own epistolary style was formed before he knew them, and that something of the tradition of

[1] Quintilian was only known to him by a torn and disordered manuscript. To him Petrarch says, "Yet perhaps your work is still somewhere in existence, unknown even to those who hold it." The prediction was fulfilled by the discovery of a complete manuscript of Quintilian in the library of the great monastery at Constance.

classical antiquity still lingered in the intercourse of the learned through what was then the common language of letters all over the world.

In the year 1359 Petrarch amused himself by putting his papers in order. The quantity of them was enormous. They were discoloured by time. They were eaten by mice. He committed (though not without a sigh) a thousand pieces to the flames. But from this mass he selected and arranged in twenty-four books the "Familiar Epistles," which he placed in the hands of his friend Socrates: his poetry was given to another friend, Barbato. The collection must afterwards have been enlarged, for it contains letters of a later date. Petrarch himself lived till 1374, and his literary executors died before himself. Thus, however, and then, the collection was made; and it is not without interest to hear what he says of his own manner of writing in the preface addressed to his friend Socrates with this volume:—

"You will find here no great force of language, for indeed I do not possess it, nor would it be in place here if I did; for Cicero himself did not use that faculty in which he excelled, either in his letters or in those works which are, as he says himself, of an equable and temperate discourse. He kept that egregious force, that lucid, rapid, and overwhelming flood of eloquence for his orations; but that vein is by me untried. For I have ever stood aloof from public affairs, and though my fame may sometimes have been attacked by low murmurs or clandestine enmity, it has never received a wound that I cared to avenge or to avoid. Nor have I frequented the law courts, or learned to adapt my tongue to them, in opposition to nature, which has given me the love of silence and solitude, the hatred of strife, the scorn of money. And it is well: since I have not felt the want of that which, wanting it, I might have been ill provided with.

Without, then, that oratorical power, which I desire not, and do not abound in, and which, if I had it in abundance, would remain unused, you will read, my friend, what I have written in trivial, domestic, and familiar language, such as we are wont commonly to use. The very title I have given to this collection, 'Letters on Familiar Things,' describes my meaning: they are simple narratives of daily events, neatly expressed, with a few moral reflections; and this was the course Cicero himself observed. . . . Yet these are things to which I look with poignant regret. I am ashamed of my too easy life. My letters will show that in early days I spoke with the vigorous sobriety of a healthy mind—that I consoled others as well as myself,—as time passed on I became more humble and more frail: so that it may be said of me hereafter, that I was a man in youth and a child in old age."—Præfatoria Epist. Fam.

How characteristic is this language, and, with some allowance for the slight affectation and the puerility of a mind too self-conscious of its own power and its own defects, how nearly do these letters bring us to an intimate knowledge of every chord of the writer's heart! But Petrarch did injustice to his oratorical powers, as was his wont when he was in one of his solitary moods. Many of his letters on public affairs—such as the addresses to Rienzi in his triumph and his fall—to the Emperor Charles IV.—and to Pope Urban V. on his removal to Italy,—are essentially orations, and were composed in no familiar strain, but rather with what might be described as an imitation of Ciceronian art.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASCENT OF MONT VENTOUX.

It is impossible, within the limits of this little volume, to include the variety of details suggested by these letters, amounting to nearly 500 in number, for 183 additional letters are now added to the collection by the researches of Signor Fracassetti; for in truth, almost all we know of the true character and life of Petrarch is comprised in them. I shall select from them at least one complete specimen of those familiar narratives of his life at Vaucluse, which is, I think, of peculiar charm and interest.

The Mons Ventosus, as it was called in Petrarch's language, better known as the Mont Ventoux, is a mountain about 7000 feet in height, situated to the north-east of Avignon, and at no great distance from Vaucluse. It is visible all over the country, and as the modern railway traveller passes swiftly down the valley of the Rhone, the blanched rocks of old Ventoux still frown across the plain. This mountain Petrarch resolved to ascend. On the 26th April 1335 he made the expedition; and on his return he sent the following vivid de-

scription of it to his spiritual adviser, Father Denis di Borgo San Sepolcro :[1]—

"I have this day ascended the highest mountain in this district, which is very deservedly called Le Ventoux, for the sake of seeing the remarkable altitude of the place. I have cherished this project for many years. You know that from my boyhood, whilst fate has been disposing of the affairs of men, I have been passing my time here. This mountain, which is visible from a great distance, was always before my eyes, but it was long before I could find any one to accompany me, till I opened the matter to my only younger brother, whom you know; and as he was delighted at my proposal, so I was pleased to have a friend and a brother for my companion. On the appointed day we left home, and we got to Malaucène in the evening.[2] This place is at the foot of the mountain towards the north. We stayed there one day, and this morning we started, with some servants, on our ascent, which we did not complete without much difficulty, for the mountain is extremely steep, and an almost inaccessible mass of rock. The poet, however, says rightly, 'Labor omnia vincit improbus.' The day was long, the air

[1] No two men could be more unlike, divided as they were by five centuries of time, and by a chasm of opinions wider than the centuries, than Francis Petrarch and John Stuart Mill. Yet a singular chance led them both to choose a retreat nearly at the same spot, within a short distance of Avignon. Mill, who was a great pedestrian and botanist, must have explored every part of the country once so familiar to Petrarch, including probably the Mont Ventoux; and what is still more remarkable, both of them were attached to the place by an enthusiastic and undying attachment to the memory of a woman passionately beloved, invested with all the glories of an ideal worship, and buried at Avignon. It would be curious to know if Mill had read Petrarch's letters, which in some outward circumstances bear a resemblance to the incidents of his own life.

[2] Malaucène is a town of about 2700 inhabitants (at the present time), situated at the foot of Le Ventoux, and upon the river Grausel.

balmy, we were supported by the vigour of our minds, and such bodily strength and activity as we possess, so that the nature of the place was the only obstacle. We met with an old shepherd in one of the dells of the mountain, who did all he could to dissuade us from our attempt, telling us that some fifty years before he had been invited to go to the summit by the ardour of youth, that he had got nothing by it but discouragement and fatigue, and that his body as well as his cloak were torn by the rocks and brambles; he added that he never heard of any similar enterprise being undertaken either before or since. Whilst he was vociferating all this, our desire to proceed (for thus it is with the incredulous minds of young men) increased with the objections he made. When the old man perceived that all his remarks were vain, he accompanied us a little way amongst the rocks, and pointed out a made path, giving us at the same time a vast deal of good advice, and making repeated signs to us after we were gone. We threw off such of our garments as might have embarrassed us, and began the ascent with great vigour and gaiety. But, as usually happens, fatigue very soon follows great efforts. We soon sat down upon a rock, whence we again started at a more moderate pace, I more especially lessened my mountaineering enthusiasm, and whilst my brother was seeking for short cuts over the steepest parts of the mountain, I more warily kept below, and when he pointed out the path to me, I answered that I hoped to find an easier access, and that I willingly went round in order to advance on more level ground. But whilst I was alleging this excuse for my laziness, the others got far above me, and I was wandering in the gullies of the mountain, where my path was far from being easier, so that the way was lengthened, and my useless labour became more and more irksome. As it was too late to repent of my error, I determined to go straight up, and I at last rejoined my brother, whom I had lost from sight, and who had been quietly resting on a rock, after much toil and anxiety, so that we again started together. The same thing, however, happened again and again in a few hours, and I began to find that human ingenuity was not a match for the

nature of things, and that it was impossible to gain heights by moving downwards. Passing, however, with the readiness of thought from corporeal to incorporeal things, I could not help apostrophising myself in the following words: The very thing which has happened to thee in the ascent of this mountain, happens to thee and to many of those who seek to arrive at final beatitude, though it is less evident, because the motions of the body are palpable and open, those of the mind are invisible and concealed. The life of the blest is indeed set on a high place, strait is the path which leads to it, many are the hills which intervene, and the pilgrim must advance with great strides from virtue to virtue. Lofty is the end of all things, the termination of life, to which our peregrination tends. We all wish to arrive thither, but, as Naso has it—

'Velle parum est, cupias ut re potiaris oportet.'

But thou, certainly, unless in this as in many things thou art self-deceived—not only wishest, but deservest. What, then, retains thee? nothing, indeed, but the apparent ease and advantage of that path which lies through earthly and low pleasures, wherein when thou hast gone astray, thou must either mount straight to the summit under all the weight of thy misspent toil, or thou must lie thee down in the trenched valleys of thy sins to be haunted by the shadows and darkness of death, and to pass an eternal night in perpetual torture. This reflection seemed to reanimate my sinking vigour, and enabled me to complete my ascent. I only wish that I may accomplish that journey of the soul, for which I daily and nightly sigh, as well as I have done this day's journey of the feet, after having overcome so many difficulties. And I do not know whether that pilgrimage, which is performed by an active and immortal soul, in the twinkling of an eye, without any local motion, be not easier than that which is carried on in a body worn out by the attacks of death and of decay, and laden with the weight of heavy members.

"The highest peak of all is called 'Le petit-fils,' by a sort of antiphrasis, for it seems rather to be the father of all the mountains in the neighbourhood. There is a little plot upon

the summit, where we were all very glad to sit down. Since, father, thou hast read of all the perils of our ascent, vouchsafe to listen to the rest, and to the remaining occurrences of this one day of my life. At first, I was so affected by the unaccustomed spirit of the air, and by the free prospect, that I stood as one stupefied. I look back; clouds were beneath my feet. I began to understand Athos and Olympus, since I found that what I heard and read of them was true of a mountain of far less celebrity. I turn my eyes to that Italian region to which my soul most inclines, and the great rugged Alps (through which, we are told, that the greatest enemy of Rome made his way with vinegar), seemed quite close to me, though they really were at a great distance. I confess that I sighed for that Italian air, more sensible to the soul than to the eyes, and an intense longing came upon me, to behold my friends and my country once more. Then a new reflection arose in my mind, I passed from place to time. I recollected that on this day ten years had elapsed since I terminated my youthful studies in Bologna, and, O immortal God, O immutable Wisdom, how many changes has that interval witnessed! . . . I wished to recollect my past uncleanness, and the carnal corruptions of my soul, not because I love them, but because I love Thee, O my God. . . . Whilst I was rejoicing in my heart, father, at my advancement in years, I wept over my imperfections, I mourned the common mutability of human actions, I forgot the place I was in and the reason of my coming thither, till, deferring my meditations to a fitter opportunity, I looked about to discern that which I came to see. The frontier of France, and the Pyrenees of Spain were not to be descried (though nothing, that I know of, intervened) by reason of the impotence of mortal sight. But I could very clearly see the mountains about Lyons on the right, and on the left the Bay of Marseilles, which is distant some days' journey. The Rhone flowed beneath our eyes. But whilst I was admiring so many individual objects of the earth, and that my soul rose to lofty contemplations, by the example of the body, it occurred to me that I would look into the book of Augustine's 'Confessions,' which I owe

to your kindness, and which I generally carry about with me, as it is a volume of small dimensions, though of great sweetness. I open it at a venture, meaning to read whatever might present itself—for what could have presented itself that was not pious and devout? The volume opened at the tenth book. My brother was expecting to hear the words of Augustine from my lips, and he can testify that in the first place I lighted upon, it was thus written: '*There are men who go to admire the high places of mountains, the great waves of the sea, the wide currents of rivers, the circuit of the ocean, and the orbits of the stars—and who neglect themselves.*' I confess that I was amazed; I begged my brother, who was anxious to hear more, not to interrupt me, and I shut the book half angry with myself, that I, who was even now admiring terrestrial things, ought already to have learnt from the philosophers that nothing is truly great except the soul. I was sufficiently satisfied with what I had seen upon the mountain, and I turned my eyes back into myself, so that from that hour till we came to the bottom, no one heard me speak. The words I had read busied me deeply, for I could scarcely imagine that they had occurred fortuitously, or that they were addressed to any one but myself. Thou mayest imagine how often on that day I looked back to the summit of the mountain, which seemed but a cubit high in comparison with the height of human contemplation, were it not too often merged in the corruptions of the earth. At every step I thought if it cost so much sweat and toil to bring the body a little nearer to heaven, great indeed must be the cross, the dungeon, and the sting which should terrify the soul as it draws nigh unto God, and crush the turgid height of insolence and the fate of man. Who shall not be drawn aside from this path by the fear of trial or the desire of enjoyment? Happy, oh happy is he, of whom methinks the poet spoke:

> 'Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
> Atque metus omnes, et inexorabile fatum
> Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari!'

How steadily must we labour, to put under our feet, not a

speck of elevated earth, but the elate appetites of our terrestrial impulses!

"In these undisguised reflections, I felt not the stones upon the path, and I regained the rustic cottage which I had left before the dawn, at an advanced hour of the night; the constant moon afforded sweet attendance to us as we walked; and now whilst the servants are busy preparing supper, I have stolen aside to write you these lines on the spur of the moment, lest with change of scene and the variety of impressions the thoughts I have penned should have deserted me. Thou seest, most beloved father, that there is nothing in me which I desire to conceal from your eyes, since I not only disclose to you my whole life, but even my individual reflections. Father, I crave your prayers, that whatever in me is vague and unstable may be strengthened, and that the thoughts I waste abroad on many things, may be turned to that one thing, which is true, good, and secure. Farewell." —Epist. Famil., l. iv. ep. 1.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAUREL CROWN.

THE scene changes, and we pass again from these mountain-paths and solitary reflections to scenes of courtly splendour and singular honour. On the 23d August 1340, Petrarch, being then at Vaucluse, received within a few hours, on the same day, a missive from the Senate of Rome, and another from the Chancellor of the University of Paris, offering to place on his head the laurel crown of poetry. The laurel wreath, the gift and emblem of Apollo, had been used of old in the Capitoline Games established by Domitian in Rome. Claudian was the last poet said to have received it. The Christian Empire abolished the pagan games; but the old tradition and usage survive in our own country to this day, and place the same wreath on the brows of our laureate. Petrarch obtained the revival of the honour, which can hardly have been spontaneous; and it is not very easy to understand on what grounds he received it. His "Africa" was unpublished; the finest of his Italian poems were not then written; his letters and Latin treatises cannot have had a very wide circulation; he was only thirty-six years of age. Yet the honour was

not due to the influence of the Colonnas, since it was proffered simultaneously from Paris and from Rome; and the fact proves beyond doubt that Petrarch had already acquired an extraordinary reputation as a lover of learning and a restorer of letters. To himself, it was doubly welcome, as a badge of fame and an emblem of love. For, in the fanciful spirit of the age, the Laurel was Daphne, the Laura of his passion. The same play on her name recurs a thousand times in his sonnets. He faints when he first sees a laurel bush on the Tuscan shore. The laurel wreath dedicated him to his mistress.

After some hesitation, and an appeal to his patron, Cardinal Colonna, he decides in favour of Rome; and early in the spring of the following year he embarks for Naples, where King Robert held his Court, who was regarded as the wisest and most accomplished of living princes. King Robert had previously addressed a letter to Petrarch, on the recommendation of Father Denis di Borgo (the same for whom the account of Mont Ventoux was written), to invite him to Naples. Nothing, therefore, was wanting to give importance to his voyage. Upon his arrival, learned conferences were held; a portion of the "Africa" was read; Petrarch insisted on being examined in all branches of learning by the King, who probably knew much less of the poetic art and of ancient literature than his pupil. For, in truth, King Robert had devoted himself rather to other branches of study; but he was a liberal patron of learning, and he assisted and encouraged Petrarch to make an active, though vain, search for the lost Decades of Livy. The ceremony was performed at Rome, in the Capitol, on

Easter Day (8th April) 1341. Count d'Anguillara, the lord of Capranica, where Petrarch had spent some days on his first visit to Rome, placed the laurel on his head. The poet appeared in a royal mantle, previously worn by King Robert himself, preceded by twelve noble Roman youths clad in scarlet, and the heralds and trumpeters of the Roman Senate. These illustrious names, this pomp, this display, and the extravagant laudation of such a ceremony, contrast singularly with the reflections of the solitary of Vaucluse, and appear to a severer taste a mere tissue of puerility and affectation. It is some relief to find that Petrarch himself, in his later years, took this view of it. In one of the last of his letters written to Boccaccio near the close of his life, he says:—

"You think that, having received by solemn decree of the Senate, that most honourable title of the Roman Laureate, as the abundant reward of my labours, since it adjudged me equal to the greatest, I should have desired nothing more. But that laurel was obtained when I was young and inexperienced; its leaves have been bitter to me; and, with more knowledge of the world, I should not have desired it. I gathered from that wreath no fruit of knowledge or eloquence, but the keenest envy, which robbed me of repose, and made me pay dear for my fame and youthful ambition. All I gained by it was to be known and marvelled at; had I been without it, I might have enjoyed that state of life which many have thought the best, to be tranquil and unknown."—Epist. Senil., xvii. 2.

But these are the querulous regrets of age, perhaps not less exaggerated than the confidence and eagerness of youth. The laurel crown did undoubtedly make Petrarch great, because it was a recognised symbol of

greatness; and thenceforward he might say that it was less true that he lived with princes than that princes sought to live with him.

From Rome Petrarch proceeded homewards to Parma, where he resided for some time, and even built a house, having established an intimacy with the lords of Correggio, then princes of Parma. Not long afterwards, the result of this new connection was seen by his elevation to a stall in the chapter of Parma, in place of, or in addition to, his canonry at Lombes. To Lombes he returned no more; for the following year he lost, by death, his first and dearest friend, Jacopo Colonna.

The following passage in a letter to another friend records the mysterious apparition that announced to the imagination of the poet this unhappy event:—

"Jacopo Colonna was a man of sufficient note in our age, but such was his remarkable power of mind, that I am persuaded he will not be forgotten for many ages. I could speak at length on his merits, for whilst he lived he was my very dear friend; but this is not to the present purpose, nor could any praise of mine be new to you, who ever loved and honoured him as the best of bishops. You judged the worth of the fruit even by the flower; and when he was in the pride of his early youth, you fostered, like a good husbandman, the treasures of his mind. No one loved the virtue of his manly heart better than yourself; you yielded the respect which was due to the dignity of the priesthood; and, lastly, when he was freed from the turmoil and the labour of life, you shed sweet tears over him, who was your father in rank, your son in age, your brother in affection. But to return. He was wearied of the business of the world; and he had left his honourable father, his brothers, and his country, to return to his diocese, which is in the more distant parts near Pampeluna. I was at that time at a great distance from

him, since I was even then in that little cottage in Cisalpine Gaul, which I still inhabit. Some account of his indisposition had reached me, and I was waiting with anxiety for further tidings. I shudder at what I am relating; but the place is still before my eyes, the very place on which I saw him in the dead of the night. He crossed the brook at the bottom of the garden. I went to meet him in great astonishment; and I asked him whence he came? why he was in such haste? why he was alone? He answered nothing; but at length, smiling, as was his wont in conversation, he said: 'Dost thou remember that once when thou wert living with me across the Garonne, thou saidst that the Pyrenean tempests were an affliction to thee? It is thence that I come; and I am going to Rome, never to return!' With these words, he reached the extremity of the place. I followed, but he gently drove me from him, and said, with a different expression of countenance, and an altered voice: 'Cease! thou canst not be my companion now!' I fixed my eyes upon him, and I saw by his ashy paleness that he was dead. I exclaimed so loud in my terror and my grief that with the noise I woke, and found myself still bewailing. I took note of the day, I related the circumstances to those who were about me, and I wrote it to my absent friends; but it was not till the arrival of a messenger, twenty-five days afterwards, that I found that the moment of his death corresponded with that of my vision. His remains were transferred to Rome three years afterwards, which I could not have guessed or known at the time. His spirit, as I hope and trust, is returned to heaven."

Pope Clement VI., in May 1342, succeeded Benedict XII. on the Papal throne. Like his predecessor, he was a Frenchman, little disposed to plunge into the vortex of Italian politics. But he was generous, liberal, and tolerant, more courtly than priestly, and he bestowed a great amount of favour, confidence, and patronage on Petrarch.

One of the first incidents of his reign was the presentation of an address to his Holiness by a deputation of eighteen Roman citizens, praying that the Papal Court would return to Rome, and that increased power might be given to the municipal government of the city. Petrarch was a member of this deputation, in his capacity of Roman laureate; and it deserves notice that Nicolas Gabrini, better known as Cola Rienzi, also formed part of it, and attracted the favourable notice both of the Pope and of Petrarch at that time, by his cultivation, his love of letters, and his enthusiasm for his country. This casual acquaintance bore fruit hereafter.

King Robert of Naples died in the following winter, to the great regret of the poet, leaving his crown to the elder of his two daughters, Joan and Mary, who were married, or betrothed, respectively to their two cousins, Andrew and Louis, of Hungary. It was hoped that this double marriage would obviate a contest of succession to the crown of Sicily; for, as the father of the Hungarian princes was the elder brother of King Robert, they had claims which could hardly be denied. But the marriage of Joan and Andrew turned out most unhappily. It was an exact parallel to the tragedy of Darnley and Mary Queen of Scots, two hundred years later. The Queen married her cousin, detested him, was more or less privy to his murder, and immediately married the man who had committed it.[1]

To this Court, deprived of the authority and control of King Robert by his death, Petrarch was sent by Pope Clement, to assert the rights of the See of Rome over his

[1] This crime was committed on the 15th September 1345, two years after Petrarch had left Naples.

fief, and to observe the state of the kingdom. He was also to obtain the liberation of some Colonnese partisans.

Nothing could be more deplorable than the aspect of affairs at Naples, and though it is stated that Queen Joanna made Petrarch one of her chaplains, he seems to have been singularly insensible to the compliment, for he describes the Court of Naples in the following terms:—

"I have seen the Queen. I have been present at their Council. May God remove such a plague from the soil of Italy! Christ was not more scorned at Memphis, Babylon, or Mecca. I mourn for thee—O noble Parthenope! No piety —no truth—no faith! A ruddy, barefooted wretch, shaven and ill clad, with scarce a cloak on his back, is governing the kingdom as the head of the regency, and conducting not only its affairs, but those of his Holiness, with all the insolence of supreme authority. They say his dress and his money-chests are very different things. And his name is Robert! So that in place of that Robert who was the glory of his age, we have another Robert who is its shame! This asp has sprung from the sepulchre of the King."

The fellow was a Hungarian friar, whom the father of the young princes had left at Naples, and who had plunged with success into all the intrigues of that dissolute Court. Petrarch accomplished nothing by his mission; but he witnessed an extraordinary tempest, which he describes in one of the most graphic of his letters. Perhaps it was written in imitation of Pliny's celebrated letter on the eruption of Vesuvius, with which it may not unfairly be compared.

"This visitation from Heaven was foretold several days before its occurrence by the bishop of a little neighbouring island, who rested his prediction on certain astronomical cal-

culations; but, as it rarely happens that prophets penetrate the whole truth of any future event, so he unluckily announced, as the completion of the catastrophe, 'that a terrible earthquake would ensue, by which Naples itself would be destroyed on the 25th of November.' This advertisement obtained so much credit that the greater part of the inhabitants actually gave up every other consideration to the grand concerns of religion, imploring the mercy of God, and His forgiveness of their past offences, as if the following day were infallibly to be their last. On the other hand, many laughed at the idle prediction, observing how little faith was due to astrologers, the more especially as only a few days had passed since the last earthquake. In the midst of these apprehensions and encouragements (of which the former, however, predominated), I retired, on the evening of the 24th, just before sunset, to my apartment, and on my way thither met almost all the females of the city (in whom the sense of shame had been swallowed up by that of danger) barefooted, and with hair dishevelled, crowding to the churches, with their babes in their arms, crying and imploring God for mercy. As night came on the sky was more than usually serene. My servants went to bed immediately after supper. For my own part, I proposed to stay up and watch the setting of the moon, at that time (I think) in her first quarter. The window which looks to the west was left open, and I saw her as, about midnight, she hid herself behind St Martin's Mount, her face much darkened, and partially covered by clouds. I then closed the window, and stretched myself on my bed, where, after lying for some time awake, I was just falling asleep, when I was roused by the noise of an earthquake. The casement was burst open, the light which I always kept burning in my chamber was extinguished, and the whole house shook to its very foundations. In this state, between sleeping and waking, and assailed by the terror of impending destruction, I ran to the cloisters of the monastery, in which I reside, and where we groped about in the dark (having only the glimmering of one dull lamp to direct us), to receive and administer whatever consolation was

in our power. Here we were shortly met by the abbot—a very pious man—with his monks in procession, who, terrified by the tempest, were bearing the holy cross and relics of saints, and preceded by lighted torches, with devout prayers and exclamations, on their way to the church to sing matins to the Virgin. This having inspired me with courage, I accompanied them to the church, where we all with one accord threw ourselves prostrate on the ground, and did nothing else but with loud uplifted voices implore the Divine mercy and forgiveness, expecting every minute the sacred building to fall and bury us in its ruins.

"It would be much too long to recount all the horrors of that infernal night; and although the truth very far exceeds all power of description, yet I fear to be thought guilty of exaggeration when I exclaim, What deluges of water! what wind! what thunder! what terrible rumbling in the heavens! what fearful tremblings of the earth! what vehement commotion in the sea! what shrieks of amazed and distracted multitudes! The long night seemed extended by magic art to twice its actual duration; and when morning came, its approach was announced to us rather by the clock than by any corresponding light in the firmament. The priests robed themselves for the celebration of Mass, while we, not having courage to lift our faces to heaven, remained stretched on the ground in prayer and supplication. Though day had broke, it was still as dark as night. The multitudes in the upper part of the city had begun to disperse; but towards the sea-shore the noise seemed to increase, and the clattering of horses was heard in the street below. What this could mean it was impossible to ascertain; but, made bold by despair, I at last mounted on horseback myself, resolved to see, even though I should perish.

"Great God! who ever heard of such things as I then beheld? The oldest seamen declared that the like was never before witnessed. In the midst of the port was seen an infinite number of poor wretches scattered about on the sea, and struggling to gain the shore, who, by the violence and fury of the waves, were battered about till they looked like

so many eggs dashed to pieces on the beach. The whole space was filled with drowned and half-drowned bodies—some with their skulls fractured, others with broken arms or legs, others with their bowels gushing out; and the screams of men and women who lived near the beach were no less terrific than the uproar of the elements. The very sands, on which the day before you walked in ease and safety, were become more dangerous than the *faro* of Messina or the whirlpool of Charybdis. A thousand or more of the Neapolitan nobility came to the shore on horseback, as if to solemnise the funeral obsequies of their country; and when I found myself among them, I began to be of better cheer, seeing that, if I were doomed to perish, I should die with the honour of knighthood. Soon the dreadful rumour came to our ears that the ground on which we trod had been undermined by the sea, and was beginning to open. We fled precipitately, and saved ourselves; but the spectacle we then beheld was the most terrible ever witnessed by mortal eye —the heavens so commingled! the sea so implacably turbulent! the waves mountain-high, and in colour neither black nor blue, as in more ordinary tempests, but perfectly white, like hills of snow, rolling over the whole expanse from Capri to Naples.

"The young Queen, barefooted, and attended by a numerous train of females, went to visit the churches dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. No vessel in the harbour was capable of resisting the violence of the gale; and three galleys which had arrived from Cyprus, and were to depart that morning, were seen by sympathising thousands to go down without a soul being saved. Three other large ships, which had anchored in the port, struck against each other and sank, and all on board perished. Of all the vessels, one only escaped, on board of which were no less than four hundred galley-slaves who had been engaged in the Sicilian war—by the strength of these malefactors alone the ship being enabled to stem the fury of the overwhelming element; and even they were quite exhausted when, at the approach of night, beyond all hope, and contrary to the universal expectation, the

sky cleared, the wind abated, and the sea grew calm. Thus the most infamous of the sufferers are those alone who escaped a watery grave. Alas that the words of Lucan should have thus proved true—'that fortune favours the wicked'—or that such is the pleasure of God—or that they who in the hour of trial are most indifferent whether they live or die, are the securest from danger! This is the history of yesterday.—November 27, 1343."[1]

[1] The translation of this letter is by Ugo Foscolo.

CHAPTER X.

THE ANARCHY OF ITALY.

When Petrarch returned from the Court of Naples to the residence which he had acquired at Parma, the condition of the northern provinces of Italy was frightfully disturbed. Mastino della Scala, burning to reconquer Parma, had sent his troops against it in January 1343, under the command of Obizzo d'Este, lord of Ferrara. Azo di Correggio, unable to resist this attack, sold the lordship of Parma for 60,000 florins of gold in October 1344; but the neighbouring houses of Gonzaga, Bologna, Verona, and Padua, jealous of the aggrandisement of the D'Estes and the Viscontis, combined to besiege the city. Petrarch relates, in a spirited letter to his friend Barbato, that, while he was still there, the forces of almost all Italy besieged the town; and, after an interval of some months, he resolved to effect his escape. He succeeded in reaching Bologna on a stormy night, through perils of robbers and perils of war; his arm was severely bruised by a fall from his horse; and then he turned his face once more from his Italian to his Transalpine Helicon.

These adventures probably inspired him with one of the finest of his political poems—the more interesting to

us, as it expresses the earnest desire of Italy for unity, independence, and peace: and the composition is assigned by the best critics to this period of his life.

The date of this piece is, however, somewhat doubtful. The allusion to the "Bavarico inganno," in one stanza, refers to the treachery of the Emperor Louis of Bavaria, who entered Italy in 1327, at the head of a confederacy of Italian princes, and betrayed them. But the Canzone is certainly of a later date. Some have attributed it to the war which raged from 1351 to 1354, between the Genoese and the Venetians, when Petrarch was employed to mediate between the two republics. A letter from the poet to Andrew Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, dated from Milan, 5th June 1354, expresses precisely the same sentiments, and may be read with interest, as it illustrates the poem.

"With a loud voice I will utter what I feel: how long are we to look for barbarous allies to ravage our country, and to bring about our public ruin? how long are we to pay with hire[1] those who come to destroy us? In the long catalogue of human follies, I know of none more insane than that which lays waste Italy with Italian brands. And if this was as displeasing to yourself and to the other princes of our republics as it is to me, who am a solitary and unemployed man, Italy, in the enjoyment of her great rights, might command those provinces of which she is now almost the slave. Love of our country, and pity for our misfortunes, should wipe away all animosities from your mind; for you may be certain, O Doge, that Venice cannot be secure if Italy should perish."—Epist. Fam., ix. 15.

[1] This alludes to the hired companies of foreign adventurers which had been summoned from Germany by the Viscontis and the Scalas, to serve their own bad purposes and personal ambition.

It is probable, however, that the following noble canzonet was written about ten years before the letter I have just quoted. The allusion to the river Po shows that it was composed at Parma. The evils of Italy were chronic; and during the whole of the life of Petrarch these internecine conflicts of the Italian republics and princes continued to tear and ravage the land, and to lay her open to foreign invasion. The language of the poet was as applicable to one of these incessant wars as to another; and it continued, alas! to be applicable for centuries. Hence this poem has ever been regarded as one of the great beacons of Italian literature; for it expresses the generous sentiments, the patriotism, and the sorrows of many generations.

"Oh, my own Italy! though words are vain
The mortal wounds to close,
Unnumbered, that thy beauteous bosom stain,
Yet may it soothe my pain
To sigh forth Tiber's woes,
And Arno's wrongs, as on Po's saddened shore
Sorrowing I wander, and my numbers pour.
Ruler of Heaven! by the all-pitying love
That could Thy Godhead move
To dwell a lowly sojourner on earth,
Turn, Lord, on this Thy chosen land Thine eye:
See, God of Charity,
From what light cause this cruel war has birth;
And the hard hearts by savage discord steeled,
Thou, Father, from on high
Teach by my humble voice, that stubborn wrath may yield!

Ye, to whose sovereign hands the fates confide
Of this fair land the reins—
(This land for which no pity wrings your breast)—
Why does the stranger's sword her plains infest?

That her green fields be dyed,
Hope ye, with blood from the barbarians' veins?
Beguiled by error weak,
Ye see not, though to pierce so deep ye boast,
Who love, or faith, in venal bosoms seek:
When thronged your standards most,
Ye are encompassed most by hostile bands.
O hideous deluge, gathered in strange lands,
That rushing down amain
O'erwhelms our every native lovely plain!
Alas! if our own hands
Have thus our weal betrayed, who shall our cause sustain?

Well did kind Nature, guardian of our state,
Rear her rude Alpine heights,
A lofty rampart against German hate;
But blind ambition, seeking his own ill,
With ever-restless will,
To the pure gales contagion foul invites:
Within the same strait fold
The gentle flocks and wolves relentless throng,
Where still meek innocence must suffer wrong;
And these,—oh, shame avowed!—
Are of the lawless hordes no tie can hold:
Fame tells how Marius' sword
Erewhile their bosoms gored,—
Nor has Time's finger blurred the record proud,
When they who, thirsting, stooped to quaff the flood,
With the cool waters mixed, drank of a comrade's blood!

Great Cæsar's name I pass, who o'er our plains
Poured forth the ensanguined tide,
Drawn by our own good swords from out their veins;
But now—nor know I what ill stars preside—
Heaven holds this land in hate!
To you the thanks!—whose hands control her helm!—
You, whose rash feuds despoil

Of all the beauteous earth the fairest realm!
Are ye impelled by judgment, crime, or fate,
To oppress the desolate?
From broken fortunes and from humble toil
The hard-earned dole to wring,
While from afar ye bring
Dealers in blood, bartering their souls for hire?
In truth's great cause I sing,
Nor hatred nor disdain my earnest lay inspire.

Nor mark ye yet, confirmed by proof on proof,
Bavaria's perfidy,
Who strikes in mockery, keeping death aloof?
(Shame, worse than aught of loss, in honour's eye!)
While ye with honest rage, devoted pour
Your inmost bosom's gore!—
Yet give one hour to thought,
And ye shall own how little he can hold
Another's glory dear, who sets his own at nought.
O Latin blood of old,
Arise and wrest from obloquy thy fame,
Nor bow before a name
Of hollow sound, whose power no laws enforce!
For if barbarians rude
Have higher minds subdued,
Ours, ours the crime! not such wise Nature's course.

Ah! is not this the soil my foot first pressed?
And here, in cradled rest,
Was not I softly hushed?—here fondly reared?
Ah! is not this my country?—so endeared
By every filial tie!
In whose lap shrouded both my parents lie!
Oh, by this tender thought,
Your torpid bosoms to compassion wrought,
Look on the people's grief,
Who, after God, of you expect relief!
And if ye but relent,

Virtue shall rouse her in embattled might,
Against blind fury bent,
Nor long shall doubtful hang the unequal fight;
For no,—the ancient flame
Is not extinguished yet, that raised the Italian name.

Mark, sovereign Lords, how Time, with pinions strong,
Swift hurries life along!
E'en now, behold, Death presses on the rear.
We sojourn here a day—the next, are gone!
The soul disrobed—alone
Must shuddering seek the doubtful pass we fear.
Oh, at the dreaded bourne,
Abase the lofty brow of wrath and scorn,
(Storms adverse to the eternal calm on high!)
And ye, whose cruelty
Has sought another's harm, by fairer deed
Of heart, or hand, or intellect, aspire
To win the honest meed
Of just renown—the noble mind's desire!
Thus sweet on earth the stay!
Thus to the spirit pure unbarred is Heaven's way!

My song! with courtesy, and numbers smooth,
Thy daring reasons grace;
For thou, the mighty, in their pride of place,
Must woo to gentle ruth,
Whose haughty will long evil customs nurse,
Ever to truth averse!
The better fortunes wait
Among the virtuous few—the truly great!
Tell them—but who shall bid my terrors cease?
Peace! Peace! on thee I call; return, O Heaven-born Peace!"

—Lady Dacre.

From these stormy scenes Petrarch returned to Vaucluse. He sang once more the pleasures of rural solitude.

He began his treatise on "Solitary Life." He added something to his cottage and his garden. But even here he was not quite secluded from the temptations of the world. The Pope offered him the post of Secretary Apostolical, which he declined. He saw Charles of Luxemburg, then recently elected King of the Romans, imprint an imperial kiss on the brow and eyes of Laura at a festival of the Papal Court, and he ingratiated himself with the future emperor by a sonnet. It is difficult to reconcile these courtly tastes with a pure passion for solitude, meditation, and philosophy. It is still more difficult to reconcile the benefices Petrarch continued to receive from the Papal Court[1] with the imprecations he breathed from time to time against the "impious Babylon," the "Court of Beelzebub," the "cursed city, only to be cleansed by the fire of heaven." But these contradictions abound in the poet's life and character, and never seem to have interfered with his popularity or his reputation.

[1] In 1342 the Pope conferred upon him the Priory of St Nicholas di Miliarino, in the diocese of Pisa, in addition to his other preferments.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RIENZI REVOLUTION.

In the following year (1347) an event occurred which was destined to change still more violently the course of Petrarch's secluded life. The state of the city of Rome was, as he had seen some years before, deplorable. Abandoned by the Papal Court, neglected by the imperial power, and tyrannised over by the great baronial houses, the people were reduced to the lowest condition of misery; life and property were unprotected; and the great name of the Roman people seemed sunk in ignominy. A sudden flash of democratic energy illuminated this scene of gloom and depression. Cola di Rienzi, who had returned from Avignon, with the office of Papal Notary, succeeded in rousing the people to a momentary greatness. He invoked the memory of their ancestors. He showed them on the monuments and inscriptions of the city a thousand traces of their old fame and power. He bade them stand up for the "good estate of Rome." The people followed their new leader with enthusiasm, as in our day they followed the Cicerovacchio of the time. They drove out the nobles; they hanged some of them for their crimes. An attempt was

made to re-enter the city by force, in which Stephen Colonna, and three other Colonnas, the sons of Petrarch's old friend and patron, were killed. Rienzi declared himself Tribune of Rome, without however disclaiming the authority of the Pope. Several of the Italian princes of Italy hastened to acknowledge him as the restorer of the Roman State. The new government was said to have established peace and order. But it was a short-lived vision. Within a few months Rienzi's own arrogance and oppression destroyed the ephemeral fabric of his power, and before the close of the year he was a fugitive and a prisoner.

No man was more enthusiastically excited by the temporary success of Rienzi than Francis Petrarch. In his eyes the Tribune was a generous and gifted being—the Messiah of a new Rome. Regardless of the ties which bound him to the Colonnas, though the popular revolution was obviously directed mainly against the aristocratic houses in Rome, and did in fact cost the lives of four members of the Colonna family—regardless of the more questionable authority of the Pope—Petrarch looked only to the greatness and glory of Rome. His first act was to address to the Roman people and their illustrious chief a hortatory address, expressed with great learning and eloquence (if they understood his allusions); and he continued to aid Rienzi with constant encouragement and advice. He even started again for Italy to hail the new-born freedom of his Roman fellow-citizens; but on reaching Genoa, he learned that the revolutionary drama had collapsed, and that his dream must end.

It would be tedious in this place to dwell on these details, though it has happened to the present and the

last generation to witness similar instances of poetical sympathy in popular movements, followed sometimes by similar disappointments. But Petrarch left one record of the Rienzi revolution which can never die. The ode he addressed to the great liberator is regarded by the Italians as one of the finest creations of their national poetry; and they pardon the faithlessness which alienated Petrarch from the Colonnas, and the disappointment which "turned his lyrical strain to a satire" before the ink was dry, in consideration of the great Canzone beginning "Spirto gentil." We shall borrow Macgregor's translation, which is one of the best in our language, though it falls far short of the strength and grace of the original.

TO RIENZI, BESEECHING HIM TO RESTORE TO ROME HER ANCIENT LIBERTY.

"Spirit heroic! who with fire divine
Kindlest those limbs, awhile which pilgrim hold
On earth a Chieftain, gracious, wise, and bold;
Since, rightly, now the rod of state is thine
Rome and her wandering children to confine,
And yet reclaim her to the old good way:
To thee I speak, for elsewhere not a ray
Of virtue can I find, extinct below,
Nor one who feels of evil deeds the shame.
Why Italy still waits, and what her aim
I know not, callous to her proper woe,
Indolent, aged, slow,
Still will she sleep? Is none to rouse her found?
Oh that my wakening hands were through her tresses wound!

So grievous is the spell, the trance so deep,
Loud though we call, my hope is faint that e'er
She yet will waken from her heavy sleep:

But not, methinks, without some better end
Was this our Rome intrusted to thy care,
Who surest may revive and best defend.
Fearlessly then upon that reverend head,
'Mid her dishevelled locks, thy fingers spread,
And lift at length the sluggard from the dust:
I, day and night, who her prostration mourn,
For this, in thee, have fixed my certain trust,
That, if her sons yet turn,
And their eyes ever to true honour raise,
The glory is reserved for thy illustrious days!

Her ancient walls, which still with fear and love
The world admires, whene'er it calls to mind
The days of Eld, and turns to look behind;
Her hoar and caverned monuments above
The dust of men, whose fame, until the world
In dissolution sink, can never fail;
Her all, that in one ruin now lies hurled,
Hopes to have healed by thee its every ail.
O faithful Brutus! noble Scipios dead!
To you what triumph, where ye now are blest,
If of our worthy choice the fame have spread:
And how his laurelled crest,
Will old Fabricius rear, with joy elate,
That his own Rome again shall beauteous be and great!

And, if for things of earth its care Heaven show,
The souls who dwell above in joy and peace,
And their mere mortal frames have left below,
Implore thee this long civil strife may cease,
Which kills all confidence, nips every good,
Which bars the way to many a roof, where men
Once holy, hospitable lived, the den
Of fearless rapine now and frequent blood,
Whose doors to virtue only are denied.
While beneath plundered Saints, in outraged fanes
Plots Faction, and Revenge the altar stains;

And, contrast sad and wide,
The very bells which sweetly wont to fling
Summons to prayer and praise now Battle's tocsin ring!

Pale weeping women, and a friendless crowd
Of tender years, infirm and desolate Age,
Which hates itself and its superfluous days,
With each blest order to religion vowed,
Whom works of love through lives of want engage,
To thee for help their hands and voices raise;
While our poor panic-stricken land displays
The thousand wounds which now so mar her frame,
That e'en from foes compassion they command;
Or more if Christendom thy care may claim,
Lo! God's own house on fire, while not a hand
Moves to subdue the flame:
Heal thou these wounds, this feverish tumult end,
And on the holy work Heaven's blessing shall descend!

Often against our marble Column high
Wolf, Lion, Bear, proud Eagle and base Snake
Even to their own debasement insult shower;
Lifts against these and theirs her mournful cry
The noble Dame who calls thee here to break
Away the evil weeds which will not flower.
A thousand years and more! and gallant men
There fixed her seat in beauty and in power;
The breed of patriot hearts has failed since then!
And, in their stead, upstart and haughty now,
A race, which ne'er to her in reverence bends,
Her husband, father thou!
Like care from thee and counsel she attends,
As o'er his other works the Sire of all extends.

'Tis seldom e'en that with our fairest schemes
Some adverse fortune will not mix, and mar
With instant ill ambition's noblest dreams;
But thou, once ta'en thy path, so walk that I
May pardon her past faults, great as they are,

If now at least she give herself the lie.
For never, in all memory, as to thee,
To mortal man so sure and straight the way
Of everlasting honour open lay,
For thine the power and will, if right I see,
To lift our empire to its old proud state,
Let this thy glory be!
They succoured her when young, and strong and great,
He, in her weak old age, warded the stroke of Fate.

Forth on thy way, my Song! and, where the bold
Tarpeian lifts his brow, shouldst thou behold,
Of others' weal more thoughtful than his own,
The chief, by general Italy revered,
Tell him from me, to whom he is but known
As one to Virtue and by Fame endeared,
Till stamped upon his heart the sad truth be,
That, day by day to thee,
With suppliant attitude and streaming eyes,
For justice and relief our seven-hilled city cries."

—MACGREGOR.

About the same time he wrote his fifth Eclogue, entitled "Pietas Pastoralis," which he sent to Rienzi, with a pleasing letter to describe its mystical meaning. Two peasants, Martius and Apicius, hold a dialogue on the restoration of the old farmhouse and the old bridge. A shepherd urges them to proceed with the work, and whilst they demur and delay, a winged messenger announces that another has undertaken it. The old farmhouse is the Capitol, the bridge is the Milvian Bridge. The contending peasants are types of the Roman community. The successful intervener is Rienzi himself. He it is who is to silence differences, tame the savage beasts, promulgate laws, and drive away the enemy.

"Thou art," the letter ends, "this younger brother of Rome. The rest is clear to thee. Farewell, great man, and remember me."—Epist. Var., 42.

Rienzi may have been a braggart in power and a coward in the time of danger; but he was the champion of municipal freedom and Roman independence. The cause, more than the man, kindled the sympathy of Petrarch. Rienzi had communicated to the poet his great design when first they met at Avignon in 1343, in one of the churches of that city; and as the future tribune spoke, his burning words inflamed his hearer and enlisted him in his undertaking. "From that day forth," he writes, "I have been tossed between hope and fear. Oh! if ever—oh! if in this our day—oh that I should ever share in so great a work and so great a glory!"

The glory sank in crime and disgrace. It is a lasting stain on Petrarch's memory that in the passion of the revolution he exhorted Rienzi to strike and spare not—even those to whom he was himself bound by the strongest ties of gratitude and affection. "All severity is an act of piety; all pity is an act of inhumanity." His rhetoric became ferocious, and he imagined that he imitated Brutus in sacrificing his friends. Rienzi ultimately arrived at Avignon in chains; for, having escaped to Prague, the Emperor Charles IV. sent him back to the Pope in 1350; yet Petrarch retained sufficient influence at the Papal Court to lighten his imprisonment, and sufficient interest in his fallen hero to restore him to liberty. But the ties which bound the poet to the Colonna family were broken for ever. The "Glorious Colonna" to whom one of the noblest of his early sonnets had been addressed was laid low. The youthful scions of that

great house shared his fate. The venerable grandsire survived his children. The Cardinal died in the following year. Petrarch confessed that he owed them everything; but "dearer than even these," he said, "is the commonwealth, dearer is Rome, dearer is Italy."[1] The Colonnas behaved with dignity, and showed no unmanly resentment, when Petrarch quitted Avignon; and in after-years he lived to say of them, "They will always be my lords and at the same time my children, as many as spring from that root which I loved and still love."

There are not many passages in modern English literature more happily conceived or more admirably expressed than the speech placed by Walter Savage Landor in the mouth of Petrarch, in that portion of the dialogues with Boccaccio which relates to the triumph and the fall of Rienzi. It narrates with truth and feeling this entire passage in his poetic history.

"The luxury and rapacity of the Church, together with the insolence of the barons, excited that discontent which emboldened Nicolo de Rienzi to assume the station of Tribune. Singular was the prudence and opportune the boldness he manifested at first. His modesty, his piety, his calm serenity, his unbiassed justice, won to him the affections of every good citizen, and struck horror into the fastnesses of

[1] This expression occurs in one of the letters addressed by Petrarch to the Commission of Four Cardinals appointed by Clement VI. to report on the reform of government in Rome. The poet does not hesitate to say that the root of the evil is the domination of the two great houses of Orsini and Colonna, to one of which he was personally attached; and that the essential reform of government in Rome must place it on a popular basis. The Cardinals did but little; but the people of Rome elected one Cerroni as their chief, who carried on the government of the city with success until the return of the Pope in 1367.

every castellated felon. He might by degrees have restored the Republic of Rome, had he preserved his moderation; he might have become the master of Italy, had he continued the master of himself: but he allowed the weakest of the passions to run away with him: he fancied he could not inebriate himself too soon with the intemperance of power. He called for seven crowns, and placed them successively on his head; he cited Lewis of Bavaria and Charles of Bohemia to appear and plead their causes before him; and lastly, not content with exasperating and concentrating the hostility of barbarians, he set at defiance the best and highest feelings of his more instructed countrymen, and displayed his mockery of religion and decency by bathing in the porphyry font at the Lateran. How my soul grieved for his defection! How bitterly burst forth my complaints when he ordered the imprisonment of Stefano Colonna in his ninetieth year! For these atrocities you know with what reproaches I assailed him, traitor as he was to the noblest cause that ever strung the energies of mankind. For this cause, under his auspices, I had abandoned all hope of favour and protection from the Pontiff; I had cast into peril, almost into perdition, the friendship, familiarity, and love of the Colonnas. Even you, Giovanni, thought me more rash than you would say you thought me, and wondered at seeing me whirled along with the tempestuous triumph that seemed mounting to the Capitol. The calmness, the sagacity, the sanctitude of Rienzi, in the ascent to his elevation, rendered him only the more detestable for his abuse of power. Nothing is so immoral or pernicious as to keep up the illusion of greatness in wicked men. Their crimes, because they have fallen into the gulf of time, we call misfortunes, and, amid ten thousand mourners, grieve only for them who made them so. Is this reason? Is this humanity? Alas! it is man."[1]

[1] Landor's Pentameron, Second Day.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEATH OF LAURA.

THESE were stormy and dreadful times. In 1348 the Black Death, as it was called, a pestilence of extreme virulence, spread over Europe. An outbreak of religious fanaticism in the sect styled the Flagellants followed in its train. The contest between France and England was at its height; Creçy was fought in 1346, Poictiers ten years later; and the land of France, which Petrarch had visited in happier days, was utterly laid waste. Italy, too, was devastated by civil war—notwithstanding which, Petrarch returned to Parma and Verona. On the 6th April, the twenty-first anniversary of the day when he had first seen Laura at the Church of St Clara, the plague terminated, after a short illness, the life of that adored lady. To me the following lines, which Petrarch inscribed on the first leaf of his favourite manuscript of Virgil, are more touching than the numerous sonnets he devoted to her memory :—

"Laura, illustrious by her virtues, and long celebrated in my songs, first greeted my eyes in the days of my youth the 6th April 1327, at Avignon; and in the same city, at the same hour of the same 6th April, but in the year 1348,

withdrew from life, whilst I was at Verona, unconscious of my loss. The melancholy truth was made known to me by letters which I received at Parma on the 19th May.

"Her chaste and lovely body was interred on the evening of the same day, in the Church of the Minorites; her soul, as I believe, returned to heaven whence it came.

"To write these lines in bitter memory of this event, and in the place where they will most often meet my eyes, has in it something of a cruel sweetness, lest I forget that nothing more ought in this life to please me, which by the grace of God need not be difficult to one who thinks strenuously and manfully of the idle cares, the empty hopes, and the unexpected end of the years that are gone."

To that ideal passion which inspired the verses of Petrarch, the death of Laura was not so much the severance of earthly ties as the consummation of desire by immortality. It was not the triumph of Death over Love, but of Love over Death. The barriers which life had interposed between them fell away; and, like the Beatrice of a greater poet, the beauty of Laura seemed renovated by a celestial grace, when her finger pointed the path to heaven. Hence the second part of the Canzoniere, written in Petrarch's maturer years, and after the death of Laura, appears to me to surpass the first in elevation of thought and beauty of language. Yet these poems breathe more of art than of nature; and I confess there is more true pathos in Burns's lines to "Mary in Heaven," than in all the sonnets and canzonets which Petrarch composed on the graces of his mistress. They are the creation of the fancy rather than of the heart; and they excite pleasure and admiration by the exquisite purity of language and rhythm in the original, without touching the deeper sources of tender-

ness and grief. The three following specimens of these celebrated effusions may give the reader an idea of them:—

SONNET.

"Death! thou the world without a sun hast left,
Obscure and cold, Love blind and wanting arms,
Gentleness naked, Beauty without charms,
Me sunk in sorrow and of quiet reft,
Gaiety banished, Courtesy laid low—
I mourn alone what all should with me mourn.
For thou the fair germ hast of virtue torn,
Its first worth spent, when shall a second blow?
Ocean and air and earth her dirge should sing
To the dull world, without her, which is made
A flowerless meadow and a gemless ring.
It knew her not while still on earth she stayed;
I knew her, who in grief yet linger here,
And heaven, who, in my loss, more beauteous doth appear." —MACGREGOR.

SONNET.

"The eyes, the face, the limbs of heavenly mould,
So long the theme of my impassioned lay,
Charms which so stole me from myself away,
That strange to other men the course I hold:
The crispèd locks of pure and lucid gold,
The lightning of the angelic smile, whose ray
To earth could all of Paradise convey,
A little dust are now!—to feeling cold!
And yet I live!—but that I live bewail,
Sunk the loved light that through the tempest led
My shattered bark, bereft of mast and sail;
Hushed be the song that breathed love's purest fire!
Lost is the theme on which my fancy fed,
And turned to mourning my once tuneful lyre."
—LADY DACRE.

SONNET.

"Recalling the soft looks which heaven adorn,
The sweet face, and, half bowed, the sunbright hair,
That modest angel voice, whose music rare
There soothed the heart which now is left forlorn,
I marvel much I still in life am borne;
Nor should I live, but she (who, good and fair
Which most she was, left still in doubt) is there,
Ready to shield me and to save each morn.
Oh then our welcomings how sweet yet chaste,
And how attentively she notes and hears
The tender history of my lifelong pains!
But in the East when day's bright step is traced
She turns to heaven, her own home that appears,
With glistening eye and cheek which pity stains."

—MACGREGOR.

The lofty Column was shattered and the Laurel was withered, for the head of the house of Colonna died at Avignon within a short time of the death of Laura. Petrarch, who had lived on love and friendship, was absent and estranged from those whose former bounty had raised him from the dust. But he was destined to survive them twenty-six active and not inglorious years. His lyre was not broken; his pen was not idle. And if his writings assumed a more melancholy tone, it was not so much to mourn over his departed friends as over himself. He returned ere long to Vaucluse; but there, too, he was surrounded by the memorials of departed friendship and disappointed love.

SONNET.

"I feel mine ancient air; and see where rise
Mine own sweet hills, where sprung that star so bright
Which, while heaven pleased, with passion and delight,
As now with tears and sorrow, filled mine eyes.
O vain and foolish thoughts! hopes born to fade!
Turbid the stream, the green bowers in decay,
Empty and cold the nest in which she lay,
Where now I live, where dead I would be laid:
I hoped from the bright eyes which fired my breast,
From the soft sighs, she might at length afford
To my worn wounded soul some hope of rest.
But no—I served a stern and thankless lord;
Alive, with a vain flame he let me burn,
And dead, he leaves me o'er her dust to mourn."

—MACGREGOR.

Yet, amidst these touching memorials of the past, Petrarch retained imperishable sources of consolation. "I trust," he said, "that Fortune will not again behold me broken and in tears." His literary activity never relaxed. Sixteen hours of the day were devoted to reading or composition. Frequently his slumber was interrupted by his studies or his prayers. His interest in public affairs was not checked by his love of solitude. And as life drew on, his philosophy and his affections sought and found a serener resting-place in faith and piety. What Chaucer calls "the love as to a creature," melted into the "affeccyoun of holiness;" and the volume of rhymes, dedicated to an earthly mistress, closes with an invocation of the Virgin, scarcely less tender than any of his earlier poems:—

"Virgin of grace, eternal and most sure!
Thou blessèd planet of a stormy sea!
Of every mariner the guide secure,
Though I recall my many sins, and see
The tempest of my passion rudderless,
And hear the last long cry of my distress.
Yet has my soul its confidence in thee!
The day is coming—it can not be long:
So fast Time journeyeth!
Thou, Virgin, thou art blessèd and art strong:
My heart is stung by conscience and by death;
But to the mercy of thy Son's control
(True Man and perfect God) commend my soul,
That He receive in peace my parting breath."

The philosophy of Petrarch, in spite of his admiration for the writings of Seneca, was not of the Stoical school. He was unable to bear with stern resignation the trials of the world. Neither fame nor power—neither solitude nor study—could reconcile him to the loss of his friends, several of whom died in rapid succession in the fatal year of the plague, or to the death of his mistress. But these mournful sentiments—the sense of human ignorance and frailty—the pangs of broken affections,—were corrected by a noble and abiding trust in that higher state of existence in which the intellect is unclouded, the passions pure, and love eternal. His complaint was answered by his belief in the immortal destiny of the soul of man; and those conceptions of the spiritual nature of our being which Plato had revealed to classical antiquity, and Christianity had realised in a sublimer and more certain language, were the solace of all his cares.

This union of contemplative with active life—or rather, the rapid and frequent alternation of his solitary studies

at Vaucluse, and his reappearace on the scene of public events—continued until near the close of his existence. Indeed some of the sonnets to the memory of Laura were written in the midst of his Italian travels; and the treatises or dialogues "On the Remedies of either Fortune," and "On the Ignorance of Himself and Others," were begun on the banks of the Po, or at the turbulent Court of the Viscontis. His political influence continued to increase, and he was still only on the verge of his greatest triumphs.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EMPEROR AND THE VISCONTIS.

THE failure of Rienzi to establish a civil government in Rome, and to restore the authority of the Roman Republic, was a great blow to Petrarch's hopes. But the object he had in view was an ideal Rome, caring little in what form or by what means the state of the Imperial city was revived. From Rienzi, therefore, he turned, within a short period, to the Emperor Charles IV. If the Pope could not be moved from Avignon—if the tribune of the Roman people was unworthy to be free—the next best course was to re-establish in Rome the one Imperial authority. That was the Ghibelline cause, to which Dante had devoted his treatise on Monarchy; and it was forcibly expressed by Petrarch in the letter addressed by him to Charles IV., on the 20th February 1350. In rhetorical language he invoked the advent of the Bohemian sovereign, as if he were an Italian prince, "for thou art Cæsar!" He drew a picture of Rome herself, under the figure of a venerable matron, pale, torn, and broken in all but her undaunted soul, to invite the presence of her lord. "The way is open," she said; "the task easy; the glory great. To Charles alone had Almighty God

reserved the glory of this enterprise." The call was not unheard: and, five years later, Petrarch himself entered Milan with the Imperial Court; but, as is usually the case with these visions of glory, the result was not what the poet had fondly anticipated.

It cannot be denied that Petrarch sought and courted that patronage of the great which Dante accepted or endured with scorn and disdain: in what was then the state of Italy, perhaps this condition of dependence was inevitable by either poet. But it is not to the honour of Petrarch that, after his estrangement from the Colonnas, and the extinction of his friends in that illustrious house, he passed, almost without an interval, to the Court of the Viscontis, who were justly regarded as the most despotic and cruel of the princely tyrants of Italy. The transition was the more singular as Azo di Correggio, Petrarch's early friend, had been betrayed and persecuted by Luchino Visconti. He seems to have thought, himself, that his conduct needed some justification, for thus he wrote from Milan to the prior of the Santi Apostoli:—

"You know my habits. I love to shake off fatigue of mind by a change of place and things. Thus it came to pass that I was returning to France after two years' absence, and had reached Milan, when this greatest of Italians" (he means the Visconti) "cast his hand upon me—more gently, more honourably, than I deserved, or hoped, or even desired. I pleaded my occupations, my hatred of the crowd, my love of quiet; but he parried all my objections, and not only promised, but has provided, me with a solitary retreat in the midst of this vast city. I therefore agreed to stay, changing nothing in my mode of life, and but little in my habitation, as long as I preserve all my liberty and independence. How long that

may be I know not; but apparently not long, if I compare myself and him, and the difference of our cares and pursuits. I am living in the outskirts of the city, near the Basilica of St Ambrose. My house is cheerful, on the left side of the church, which rears its leaden pinnacle and double towers before me; behind I look out on the city walls, and the ridge of the Alps, still crested with snow, though the summer is far spent. But the greatest of all my delights is, that I see not only the tomb, but the living image, of St Ambrose on the walls. I am sure it is like him—such is the dignity of the forehead, the majesty of the brow, the serenity of his eyes."

And again he wrote in the following letter:—

"I was aware what might be said of me. I am in the hands of the public. My lot is an old one. But do not distrust. I shall be the more famous for this rub. The public see what I do; they know not what I think: so that my better part—indeed my inner self—lies hid. Be it so. We are judged by our actions. What does the public want? Under all the circumstances, I have done for the best; or, if not that, the least evil. Be it good or bad, I did what was necessary. . . . Among other reasons for my staying, he urged that he too was an ecclesiastic,[1] and most devout for a man of such high rank, and that for an honest man to shun his conversation was a mark of pride. At last, if I am to confess to you the whole truth, when I was curiously inquiring what he wanted of me, since I had none of the qualifications he required, he replied that he wanted nothing of me save my presence, to do honour to himself and to his Court. Conquered by this compliment, I blushed, was silent, and my silence gave, or was supposed to give, consent. I knew not what to answer. I wish I could persuade the public of all this as easily as yourself. But the public says what it pleases: we do what we can. Farewell."—Epist. Fam., xvi. ep. 11 and 12.

[1] Giovanni Visconti was Archbishop as well as Lord of Milan. He died in 1354.

Certain it is that, in spite of these disavowals, Petrarch remained eight years at the Court of the Visconti; and although he continued to live apart, like a student or an ecclesiastic, he became one of the chief ministers of that prince, and was loaded by him and his nephews with honours and rewards. Nor were his public services inconsiderable. In 1354 he went to Venice as the ambassador of Giovanni Visconti, to negotiate a peace with the republic of Genoa. He harangued the people of Milan on the day that the three brothers, Matteo, Barnabè, and Galeazzo, made their triumphal entry. He stood godfather to Marco Visconti. He witnessed the treaty of peace signed at Mantua between the Viscontis and the Emperor. He was sent by Galeazzo as their ambassador to Prague; and, upon the return of King John of France from his captivity in England, after the battle of Poictiers, Petrarch was chosen to proceed to Paris to congratulate him. In that transaction he had probably taken a more active part, for Galeazzo Visconti had lent the King of France (*nomine mutui sive doni*) the sum of 600,000 florins, as a contribution to his ransom; and in return the King agreed to bestow his daughter Isabella on the son of Galeazzo Visconti in marriage. Nor was this the only royal marriage in which Petrarch bore some part. In 1368 Violante Visconti was married with singular magnificence to Lionel, Duke of Clarence, second son of Edward III., and brother of the Black Prince; and, upon the invitation of the princes, whom he had helped to raise to these alliances with the royal houses of France and England, Petrarch took his seat at the royal table.

Whilst the poet was loaded with honours in other

parts of Italy, from Naples to the foot of the Alps, there was no State in which his fame and personal merit had been so little acknowledged, or which he had revisited so little, as his native republic of Florence, to which, indeed, he owed no more than his place of birth, most grudgingly bestowed on him. Probably he felt some resentment against his countrymen, who had unjustly disgraced and banished his father, and cast himself upon the life of an exile. The world had used him well, but he owed nothing to Florence. At length, however, the day of reparation came; and it was the more welcome, as the florid address of the Prior of Arts and Gonfalonier of Justice which invited their most beloved countryman back to his native town, and promised the restoration of his paternal fields at the public expense, was brought to Petrarch by the friendly hand of Boccaccio on the 6th April 1351—a day already marked by two of the chief events of his life. His friendship for Boccaccio had commenced in the previous year, and it remained unbroken till his death. The answer of Petrarch to the republic has been preserved. It is written in the high-flown language of the time and country; but he adds, with more simplicity and feeling—

"It is, O glorious citizens! a lasting credit to you, and no small comfort to me, that you have thought fit to restore the sweet and chosen seat in which my father, my grandfather, and his father too, a man of no great letters, but of much intelligence—in which these my forefathers, more conspicuous by their honesty than their escutcheons, for generations grew old. I indeed, whether by the aid of nature or of fortune, have flown higher. But now, by you, my old nest is restored to me; I can fly back to it, and I can fold there my wandering wings. And this great gift has been restored to me in

language so flattering, that I must be of stone if it did not serve to light me on to glory and to spur me on to virtue."

It was not, however, as a citizen of Florence, but as an Italian, and as a servant and adviser of the Italian princes, the King of Naples, the Pope, the Dukes of Milan and Verona, and the Doge of Venice, that Petrarch was in his political career illustrious. And these relations were all subject in his mind to the grand object of the restoration of the unity of the empire centring in Rome, by the side of the Pope's spiritual power. It deserves a passing remark that in the fourteenth century the temporal power of the Popes had no existence in the sense it acquired in the following ages. They had ceased to be sovereigns of Rome itself in more than name. Their Court was held in Avignon, which scarcely belonged to them. The occupation of Rome by the emperors would not have been, in the eyes of Petrarch, any invasion of the Papal rights.

In the month of October 1354, four years after the date of Petrarch's invocation, the Emperor Charles IV. entered Italy, but without an army. The poet met him at Mantua in the course of the following winter, and he tells us that nothing could be more affable or polite than the demeanour of the prince; but he adds significantly, "Trust not in looks." Charles having asked him to whom his book 'On Illustrious Men' was to be dedicated, his answer, as he records it, was in the following terms:—

"'As for thee, O Cæsar! know that thou wilt be worthy of the gift and inscription of this book, when thou shalt have enranged thyself among the great, not by the splendour of a name or the glitter of a crown alone, but by noble actions and a virtuous soul.' Which saying he was pleased to ap-

prove by a serene glance from the eyes, and an august sign from his brow. So I judged that the moment was opportune for me to present him with a few gold and silver medals which I was myself very fond of. The features of Augustus Cæsar seemed almost alive, and I exclaimed: 'These, O Emperor, are the effigies of the sovereigns whom thou must study and imitate. I would not have given them to any man save thee; but to thee they were due, since thou must not only know but follow them.' I then hastily recapitulated the chief incitements to virtue which marked their lives, with which he was much pleased, and he appeared never to have received a more agreeable present."—Epist. Fam., x. 3.

Petrarch accompanied the Emperor to Milan, where a peace was concluded with the Visconti and the monarch received the iron crown; but he declined to proceed farther towards Rome. He seems to have begun to suspect that these Germans were not, after all, the Roman emperors of his dreams. Charles, however, reached the Eternal City, and was crowned there on Easter Sunday by a Papal legate; but, by a singular provision, he engaged not to sleep in the city after the ceremony—and he, in fact, made over the supreme authority to the Pope. This was exactly the reverse of what Petrarch had anticipated and desired. The imperial mirage had been as short-lived as the democratic revolution. "The Emperor," he bitterly exclaimed, "came to Rome only to be crowned there. But he who wears the tiara on the banks of the Rhone, orders him to quit the city, and whilst he allows him to bear the title of emperor, forbids him to exercise its rights. With one hand he opens the temple where the imperial crown is bestowed; with the other he closes the gates of the city, which is the seat and capital of the empire."

In truth, the retreat of the Emperor was as ignominious as his presence in Italy had been idle. He was insulted in Pisa and in Milan, and was glad to save himself, by recrossing the Alps, from personal danger. Again all Petrarch's hopes of the political regeneration of Italy were destroyed; and he broke out in a strain of violent objurgation against his illustrious patron:—

"You renounce these glorious hopes to return to your own barbarous country. Your departure has the air of a flight. Go, then, if you must; but never forget, that being master of Rome, you only sighed for Bohemia. Your father and your grandsire might greet you, on such a return, with some such words as these: 'Much have you gained, O Cæsar, by your long-expected journey and your hasty return. You carry off a crown of iron, a crown of gold, and an empty title!' You will be styled Emperor of the Romans, though you are, in fact, only King of Bohemia. Would to God you were not that. Perhaps your ambition, caged within narrower limits, would make an effort to rise, and to recover your patrimony. Cæsar, farewell! Compare what you have left with what you are gone to seek."

The Emperor seems to have regarded these invectives as the mere ebullition of a literary enthusiast; if, indeed, the epistle ever reached its destination—for perhaps some of Petrarch's letters, like several of Cicero's orations, were never delivered to those to whom they were nominally addressed. At any rate, in the following year the Emperor conferred on Petrarch the rank of a Count Palatine of the Empire; and a letter exists from the poet to the Bishop of Olmütz, then Chancellor of the Empire, in which the compliment is acknowledged with his accustomed fervour.

It was during the journey of the Emperor to Italy that

events of unusual gravity occurred at Venice which must have a peculiar interest to an English reader, for they form the subject of one of Lord Byron's noblest dramas, and they deserve to be related in the very language of Petrarch. In a letter to the Archdeacon of Genoa, on the 24th April 1355, after enlarging on the death of Andrew Dandolo and the great sea-fight of the Genoese and Venetians off Sapienza in the preceding autumn, he goes on :—

"All this is old, but I have newer intelligence to give you. The late Doge was succeeded by an old man, who came late to the government of the State, yet too soon for the State and for himself—a man whom I had long familiarly known, but in whom opinion was mistaken, for he was of more courage than counsel. His name was Marino Faliero. It was not given to him to fulfil his life in the supreme dignity, for he entered the palace with the wrong foot. This magistrate, consecrated by the traditions of all time in that city, and worshipped as antiquity worshipped its divinities, has been by the Venetians, within the last three days, beheaded in the vestibule of his own palace. I can ill explain the cause of such an event. But no one justifies him : all say that he sought to change I know not what in the constitution of the republic. The strangest thing is, that he was absent on a mission to the banks of the Rhone to the Roman Pontiff to negotiate a peace, first attempted by myself and afterwards by him, equally in vain, when the honour of election to be Doge was conferred on him, without his seeking it or even knowing it. On his return to Venice he seems to have thought what no one had thought before, and to have suffered what no man had suffered. In the most famous and beautiful spot of all those which I have visited, where his ancestors had frequently walked in triumph—there, like a slave, stripped of the insignia of his rank, and dragged by a concourse of the people, he lost his head, and polluted with his blood the doors of the sanctu-

ary, the entrance to the palace, and those marble stairs, so often glorified by solemn festivals or trophies torn from the enemy. Such was the place. I also mark the time. It was in this year 1355, on the 18th April. The excitement is so great, that whoever considers the manners and discipline of that city, and how great a change the death of a single man may threaten to bring about (though it is said that others are included in the same conspiracy), will acknowledge that no greater event has occurred in our times in Italy. I absolve the people, though perhaps they might have vindicated their rights with less severity. I pity and am indignant with the unhappy man, who was invested with an honour he had not strength to bear, and who seems to have acquired in earlier life a false repute for wisdom. But this event shows, as in a mirror, to the chiefs and rulers of States, that they may look upon themselves not as the lords, or even dukes, but as the honoured servants of the commonwealth. Farewell! and as public affairs are agitated, let us endeavour to guide our private life with moderation."[1].

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[1] Rawdon Brown's Preface to the Venetian State Papers. The details of the conspiracy (if conspiracy it was) for which Marino Faliero suffered have always remained, as they were to Petrarch, obscure, for the Council of Ten took especial care to conceal them. The fourth volume of the 'Misti Consiglio X.' contains its decrees for the year 1355. On Friday, 17*th April*, of that year (not, as Petrarch says, *the* 18*th*), Marino Faliero was beheaded. In the usual course the minutes of the trial should have been entered on the 33d page of that volume; but in their stead there is a blank space and the words—

"Ñ SC̃BATUR'

Let it not be written.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PAPAL POWER.

THE hopes which Petrarch had cherished of the restoration of a Roman republic under Rienzi, or a Roman empire under Charles IV., were, as we have seen, speedily blighted. Rienzi, indeed, did contrive to return to Rome in 1354, but only to be put to death by the people he had misled. A third element of Roman power remained—that of the Church; but in the eyes of Petrarch, as well as of Dante, the Papacy itself was denationalised, and almost unchristianised, by the voluntary exile to Avignon, and by the successive election of five French prelates to the great Italian see. The hatred and contempt of the poets for the Popes, the cardinals, and the clergy, as long as they lived in a French palace and wore a French livery, were essentially the result of national jealousy and distrust. It may be doubted whether the great Catholic poet himself had in view any serious reformation of the discipline or doctrine of the Church, beyond the return of the Pontiff to the shrine of the Apostles and the throne of the Vatican. But the relations of Petrarch to the Popes differed widely from those of Dante. He was no outlawed and exiled

Ghibelline, who asks himself whether bread might not be wanting, but a favourite and a courtier of those same Pontiffs whom he accused. He accepted favours and benefices at their hands. He gave them counsel; and five times he refused one of the highest offices a Pope could bestow. In one of his garrulous but amusing letters, he relates the pressure put upon him to take office by two cardinals, and by the Pope himself. He pleaded his love of liberty and his contempt of money, for in those days political power meant enormous wealth; yet almost had the tempter prevailed, when he was suddenly asked whether he could bend his grand and oratorical style to the humble and subtle language befitting the Court of Rome. "Impossible," said the poet. "If my style is too good for the place, the place is not good enough for me;" and so he preserved his freedom.

It is extremely remarkable that in all Petrarch's political writings his sympathies are ever on the side of the people. One does not expect to find in a poet, a courtier, and a prebendary of the fourteenth century, raised to distinction by aristocratic patronage, and to wealth by Church preferment, so strong and faithful an adherence to liberal opinions. He derived them, with much of his philosophy, from the noble source of antiquity. The republics of Greece and Rome, with their grand traditions, their patriots, their liberties, and their glory, inspired him with admiration for popular government, and for models of virtue which nothing in his own times could claim to represent. Thus, in a letter to four cardinals who had asked his advice on the reform of the Roman commonwealth, he scrupled not to inveigh against the baronial houses which had usurped the su-

preme power in Rome, and told them that the present welfare of the people could never be secured till this oppression was removed.

"Wrest, therefore," he went on, "this pestilent tyranny from their grasp, in spite of them; and not only admit the common people of Rome to a share of public honours, but take the ill-administered functions of the Senate from unworthy hands. These nobles, if they were citizens, and good citizens, could lawfully claim but a part of this authority; but, behaving as they do, they are unworthy of the State, which they destroy, and of the fellowship of the citizens, whom they oppress—to say nothing of honour. How vain is the boast of nobility and wealth by those who have no claim of virtue! for even the old Romans, whose virtue was great and excellent, failed to exclude the people from the honours of the State. As often as this contest was renewed, the proud nobility was always beaten by the humble multitude."

Whatever may have been the position of Petrarch under John XXII. and Benedict XII., who were the Popes of his earlier years, he certainly enjoyed considerable influence under Clement VI., who was a cultivated prelate. Innocent VI. took him for a magician, because he read Virgil; and Virgil had in the middle ages the mystical character of a Sibylline prophet. This, as Petrarch says in a letter to Cardinal Talleyrand, was no joke, when this same personage was elected Pope. If he was a magician, there were two things to be done—he might be burnt, or he might be made a Minister of the Holy See. Innocent offered to take the latter course. The poet replied, rather sarcastically, "It cannot be that the man who is chosen by the Pope to be his secretary should be deemed a necromancer, or that one who is initiated in his secret counsels, and even writes his sacred name,

should be supposed to practise sorcery." To all such offers Petrarch opposed his modesty, his disinterestedness, and above all, and with greater truth, his aversion to responsibility and fatigue.

Yet this same Pontiff, Innocent VI., not only conferred two benefices on Petrarch, and offered several more, but repeatedly pressed on him the political office the poet had so often declined. Pope Clement VI., as we learn from a letter written nearly at the close of his life from Arquà, had intended to make him a bishop; but the poet declares that he never would consent to be a prelate, or to hold a benefice with cure of souls, however rich. In fact, he never was in priest's orders; and the appointments he held in the Church, though sufficiently lucrative, were stalls and canonries in several chapters. Even at Arquà, he says—

"I have here a prebend which gives me bread and wine, not only for my own use, but to sell. Residence would increase my income: but I detest the life of cities; and I had rather hunger in the solitude of the country than live in abundance in towns, though I never can escape from the people who flock about me. I have some servants, whom I cannot do without; a few horses—that is, at present, two; and generally five or six amanuenses, though at present only three, for they are not easily to be met with, and I like to have illuminators (*pictores*) who are not blockheads. Then I have one old priest, who does duty for me in church; and just as I am sitting down to dine alone with him, down comes a host of guests to be entertained with meat and good stories. The thing cannot be avoided, without my appearing either prouder or poorer than I really am. My chief desire is to build a little oratory to the Blessed Virgin here. I am setting about it, though I should have to pawn or sell my books for it."

The drift of all this seems to be that he wanted to dip a little deeper into the treasures of Mother Church, who had certainly been a bountiful mother to him; but though these glimpses of real life sometimes disclose the less dignified side of his character, there is a freshness and truth about them which have a peculiar charm.

The debt of gratitude for substantial favours which Petrarch owed to the Church, and indeed personally to the Pontiffs, did not prevent him from inveighing with extreme virulence against the Papal Court. The work called by him the "Epistola sine Titulo," which appears to have been a clandestine production, abounds in this declamation. The "Eclogues," in Latin hexameters, are really satires in a bucolic form, but sometimes as coarse in language as the Satires of Juvenal. Three of his sonnets, directed against the Roman Court and clergy, were for centuries proscribed by the Church as impious. Benedict XII. he described as a drunkard, Clement VI. as a profligate, Innocent VI. as a fool. Upon the death of this Pope in 1362, the Sacred College proceeded to elect, by a most unusual departure from precedent, not a cardinal, but a simple priest, Guillaume de Grimoard, then Abbot of St Victor at Marseilles, to the highest office in the Church. The new Pope assumed the name of Urban V., and soon gave signs of intelligence and independence. Petrarch, who was then living at Venice, hailed this remarkable election as a proof that Providence had great designs to be accomplished by the new Pope; and Cardinal Talleyrand, the experienced Minister of the Holy See, exclaimed, "Now we have a Pope indeed." The poet therefore addressed Urban in a congratulatory letter; but he declined an invitation to return to the Court

of Avignon, partly from the dread of having an office forced upon him unsuited to his years, and partly from his firm determination to live free and without care. It was not till the 29th June 1366 that Petrarch addressed the Pope in one of those powerful hortatory letters which on great occasions he hurled, like the prophet of the age, at the rulers of Rome or of the world. He had exhorted Rienzi; he had exhorted the Emperor; he had urged each successive Pope to return to Rome: but the most eloquent of those appeals was that made to Urban V. It fills an entire book of the "Senile Letters" (the 7th), and but a small portion of it can be inserted here:—

"Hearken then to me, O Roman Pontiff! hear me, O Christian prince! Rome invokes you as her spouse, Christendom as its chief,—calling you to action, not to repose; to war, not to peace—but to a war of short duration, to give lasting peace to the soul, salvation to many, immortal glory to yourself. Choose by what death you would die; for whether you fulfil your glorious office, or whether you basely betray it, death is alike inevitable. Raise yourself, therefore, to this magnanimous enterprise, and turn your back on that which is unworthy of you. God has done great things for you; neither can that be small which you have to do for Him. The lives of men are short—the lives of Popes especially so. When you shall shortly appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, in whose presence you stand not as a master, and we as slaves, but He only as Master, and you, like ourselves, a slave, what if these words are addressed to you,—'Poor and humble, I raised thee from the ground, not merely as the equal of princes, but as one above them all. Thou, then, where hast thou left the Church I trusted to your faith? For so many gifts vouchsafed to thee, what is thy return? To have kept on the rock of Avignon the seat placed by my hand upon the capitol'?

"Whatever be your final decision, one prayer at least your Rome addresses to you. May it seem just to you at least to restore to her her other consort, the Emperor, whom your predecessor Innocent VI. succeeded by a rash engagement in divorcing from her. Deign to remove that impediment, and to command that Cæsar should return to Rome. As long as Rome remains deprived of both her chiefs, human affairs can never go right, nor can the Christian republic enjoy peace. If either of them return, all will go well; if both, perfectly, and in the plenitude of glory and success. May Christ our Lord prolong your days, and open your heart to counsels, not smooth or flattering, but just, sincere, and, as I believe, acceptable to God!"

These emphatic lines, which I have condensed, express the last political dream of Petrarch's life; and he had the happiness of thinking that his prayer and exhortation had been heard. Urban was not averse to visit Rome. In April 1367 he embarked at Marseilles on a Venetian galley, and, accompanied by a fleet of twenty vessels, sailed for the shores of Italy. He landed at Genoa, received the homage of the Italian princes at Viterbo, and in October entered Rome, where he remained three years, encouraged and applauded by the poet. But the effort was made in vain. The peace of Italy, the tranquillity of Rome, were not secured. Urban, in failing health, longed to return to his native country, and arrived there in the autumn of 1370, a few weeks before his death. Petrarch, exasperated at this last disappointment, addressed the dying Pontiff in the sternest language. "Did you not, like St Peter, when you fled from Rome, meet Christ upon your way? 'Domine, quo vadis?' 'I go to be crucified there again, since you are departing from it.'"

CHAPTER XV.

PETRARCH AT VENICE AND ARQUA.

PETRARCH never resorted to the Court of Urban V., either at Avignon or at Rome, nor does he appear in the last twenty years of his life to have resided at Vaucluse. He started, indeed, for Rome in 1370, and made his will before he undertook the journey; but falling ill at Ferrara, he never reached his destination. He had become, he says, not so much a visitor as a denizen of the cities of Northern Italy, Milan,[1] Verona, then Parma and Ferrara, and lastly Padua. No doubt the favour of the reigning princes of these cities first attracted him to them. In 1361, the Emperor, the Pope, and the King of France, had all invited him to their respective Courts; but he preferred to remain at Milan. Although he once set out to visit the Emperor at Prague, I believe he crossed the Alps no more. But as his friends died off,[2] and

[1] Petrarch had a small country-house at Garignano, on the Adda, about three miles from Milan, and mentions that he had already spent an Olympiad at Milan, and was beginning a lustre. His house in the town, as has been already mentioned, was near St Ambrose.

[2] His friend Socrates died at Avignon in 1361; Azo di Correggio in 1362; and in 1363 his three friends, Laelius, Francesco Neldi, whom he called Simonides, and Barbato.

the favour of princes cooled, the spot which he found most attractive to those who would lead a life of tranquillity and repose was Venice, and there he remained from 1362 to 1368. Petrarch had first visited Venice in 1352, when he went there to negotiate the peace; and he had formed an acquaintance which ripened into friendship with Benintendi da' Ravegnani, Chancellor of the Republic. In later years Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio a charming description of this Venetian society:—

"Of my old friends, indeed, scarcely one remains except yourself. I know not what has become of our Barbato—perhaps he is in the Abruzzi. [Both Lælius and Socrates were recently dead.] Come, then, to my call. Nay, you are invited by the mild season of the year—by the absence of every care but those of the pleasant and joyous Muse—to a most salubrious house, which I do not describe to you, because you know it so well. A choice group of friends awaits you; I know not which of them is the best company. There is Benintendi, the Chancellor of this famous city, whose disposition agrees with his name, and who, after giving the day to public affairs, reserves the evening for private friendship and polished study. He comes with his cheerful friendly voice in his gondola to refresh himself with pleasant talk, and you already know how delightful are those nocturnal voyages in such company. Then there is our Donato Appeninigena, who has come down from his Tuscan hills to fix himself on this shore of the Adriatic. Or if you are tired of this place, though the conversation of friends makes the sky more blue than any wind that blows, it would be delightful to go with you to Capo d'Istria or Trieste, where I am told the climate is perfect. Or we might go in search of the source of the Timavus, as I have long meant to do; but it is not in the neighbourhood of Padua or the Euganean hills. The true site is in the territory of Aquileia."

Boccaccio, driven out of Florence by the plague, joined

the party, and was no doubt a great addition to it. He brought with him Leontius Pilatus, one of the fugitive Greeks who attempted, with ill success, to teach Petrarch Greek. He never learnt it—could barely make out the letters—and read what he knew of Homer in a Latin translation. Perhaps, too, Boccaccio brought with him, on some such occasion, the 'Divina Commedia,' which Petrarch had never sufficiently appreciated and admired, perhaps from jealousy, and the sense that there had been a greater poet than himself in Italy. Boccaccio gave Petrarch a copy, made with his own hand, of that immortal work, of which he was (as is well known) an enthusiastic admirer. A letter exists from Petrarch to Boccaccio (Ep. Fam., xxi. 15), in which the poet defends himself against the charge of envy; but it is certain that he never did justice to his greater countryman. For a long time he refused to read his poem, lest it should affect his own style. He would not write his name. But he disclaims all feeling of personal hostility. The passage is curious, especially from the covert allusion to his own supposed superiority in the use of words and rhythm :—

"There really is no cause at all of enmity towards a man whom I never saw but once, and that in my earliest childhood. He lived with my grandfather and my father, being younger than the one and older than the other. They were banished from their country on the same day; and griefs shared with others are wont to beget strong friendships, and this the more, as there was between them a similarity not only of fortune but of tastes and mind. But while my father, being in exile, was drawn aside by other cares for his family, *he* persevered, and devoted himself the more intently to his enterprise, laying all other things aside, eager for fame alone. Nor can I sufficiently admire and applaud a man

whom neither the injustice of his country, nor exile, nor poverty, nor the stings of dissension, nor love for his wife, nor affection for his children, could divert from his chosen path, though many men of a great and sensitive genius are distracted by the lightest murmur: indeed this happens more commonly to those who pay great attention to style as well as sense, and apply themselves to words and rhythm, for they need silence and quiet. I confess, that in all my eagerness for books, it was long before I cared to read this one; for, as I was myself endeavouring to write in the vulgar tongue, I was afraid lest, at a flexible age, disposed to admiration, I might consciously or unconsciously have become an imitator. That indeed, as I grew in confidence, I scorned; and I felt so much reliance on myself that, without the aid of any mortal, I thought I could accomplish what I had undertaken in my own manner."

It is probably to these later years of Petrarch's life that we may assign the composition of the poems which, under the name of the Triumphs of Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, and Deity, form the third part of the Canzoniere. They are the reminiscences of his life, beginning with the last emotions of his youthful passion, illustrated by his art, and tending to the final consummation of piety and faith. Some critics have regarded these poems as the most perfect of Petrarch's works. They are written in terza-rima, the metre of Dante; and it is hard to believe that they were not in some degree inspired by rivalry of the great master. But they want that lyrical flow which lends its greatest charm to Petrarch's versification. They are didactic in form and heavy in structure. To the force and originality of Dante, Petrarch could never attain; and even the visions of eternal life and Almighty power on which he fixed his eyes, are immeasurably below the glories of the "Para-

diso." It might be said of these illustrious men, that if the one raised a mortal to the skies, the other drew an angel down. These five Triumphs, he writes, ere he lays down his pen for ever, are the triumphs of earth; the sixth, he humbly hopes, may await him in heaven, when Time shall be no more.

No greater proof of affection and esteem could be given to Venice by Petrarch than the donation of his library, for he had been all his life, as we have seen, a collector of MSS. The art of printing was still in the womb of time. He proposed, therefore, to make "the blessed St Mark" heir of his books, on condition that they should be kept together in a suitable building, and "preserved for ever for the amusement and benefit of noble and literate persons in that city." And he expressed a hope that his example would be followed by others, which was the case.

The proctors of St Mark having reported in favour of the project, the Republic decreed that—

"Considering the offer made by Messer Francis Petrarch, whose reputation is so great that no moral philosopher and poet has been known in Christendom to compare with him; and seeing that this offer may contribute to the glory of God and St Mark, and of our city,—we decree that it be accepted in the terms set forth by him, and we order that a sum be appropriated to the purchase of a suitable house for him as long as he shall live."

The result was that the poet and his library were lodged at the public expense in the Molina Palace—an enormous edifice with two towers overlooking the harbour; and on the 10th September 1362, the date of the foregoing decree, the Bibliotheca Marciana, or Library of St Mark, was thus founded by the munificence of Pet-

rarch and the Signory. This noble institution flourishes to the present day, for it is one of the guardians of the archives of Venice, and although but few of the MSS. which belonged to Petrarch are now to be found there, some of them are still said to exist, and the Library was an object of special care to the Signory of Venice. Its keepers have always been men distinguished for learning —amongst them John Dempster in the sixteenth, and the Abbate Leith in the seventeenth century, both Scotchmen; and the Library itself ranks amongst the most important in Europe.

But neither Venice nor Padua were to be Petrarch's last abode. In September 1372 he writes to Pandolfo Malatesta from Arquà: "These cities please me no longer. But I have found a secluded and pleasant retreat among the Euganean hills, in a delightful and salubrious position, where often enough, attracted by the beauty of the spot or by his affection for me, the noble lord of Padua comes to see me." His literary life was not ended, for in this solitude he wrote the dialogue "On the Ignorance of Himself and Others"—as pungent and spirited as any of his philosophical compositions. He also prepared an essay for Francesco di Carrara on the art of government; and his last work was the final correction of the "Triumph of Deity," which completes his poems. The tale of "Griseldis," which moved him to tears, was the last piece read to him; it was told in the touching language of Boccaccio; and the letter in which he acknowledged the charm of those matchless fictions, was perhaps the last he dictated to his friend. But his physical strength was now greatly impaired. A journey to Pesaro was beyond his strength.

The threescore years and ten allotted to man were counted out. Life was ebbing smoothly away; and on the 20th July 1374, he was found dead in his study over an unfinished page.

He who would seek, as I have done, the last memorials of the life and death of Petrarch in that sequestered Euganean village, will still find them there. A modest house, apparently of great antiquity, passes for his last habitation. A chair in which he is said to have died is shown there. And if these details are uncertain, there is no doubt that the sarcophagus of red marble, supported on pillars, in the churchyard of Arquà, contains, or once contained, his mortal remains. Lord Byron and Mr Hobhouse visited the spot more than sixty years ago in a sceptical frame of mind; for doubts had at that time been thrown on the very existence of Laura; and the varied details of the poet's life, which are preserved with so much fidelity in his correspondence, were almost forgotten.

But Arquà tells its own touching story, and is even more consecrated to the memory of Petrarch than Vaucluse. It inspired some of the most graceful stanzas of "Childe Harold," which may form an appropriate termination to these pages:—

"There is a tomb in Arquà—reared in air,
Pillared in their sarcophagus, repose
The bones of Laura's lover; here repair
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,
The pilgrims of his genius. He arose
To raise a language, and his land reclaim
From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes;
Watering the tree which bears his lady's name
With his melodious tears, he gave himself to fame.

They keep his dust in Arquà, where he died,
The mountain-village where his latter days
Went down the vale of years; and 'tis their pride—
An honest pride—and let it be their praise,
To offer to the passing stranger's gaze
His mansion and his sepulchre; both plain
And venerably simple, such as raise
A feeling more accordant with his strain,
Than if a pyramid formed his monumental fane."

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